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NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA

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EXPRESS TO HINDUSTAN

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THE CAR WHEN NEW

AFTER FOUR MONTHS' WEAR

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA

EXPRESS TO HINDUSTAN

AN ACCOUNT OF A MOTOR-CAR JOURNEY FROM LONDON TO DELHI

BY M. H. ELLIS WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND SKETCH MAP :: :: ::

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA

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To
My Friend
Jack Tanner

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PREFACE

THIS volume seeks to tell the story of an attempt by three Australians, under the author's leadership, to reach Australia by motor-car over a route in which sea travel was reduced to a maximum of 800 miles.

To synchronize their departure with the most suitable weather conditions—the vital factor for success—was impossible owing to personal reasons, and it was necessary that they should leave London in the heart of winter and endeavour to reach India before the heat of mid-summer and the monsoonal rains set in.

Unfortunately, the unavoidably late delivery of their motor-car by the manufacturers and unlucky breakages inevitable in an experimental vehicle which started on so formidable a journey a few days after the heaviest and most widespread snowfall—it extended from the French border to Jerusalem—in forty years, so delayed the venture that the rains had begun in Burma when India was reached and the party had suffered a severe gruelling from the variations of weather, which frequently plunged them into a sea-level heat of 112° Fahr. one day and froze them with an icy cold blast, in the mountain snows seven or eight thousand feet up, the next.

The advent of the rains rendered it futile to attempt the remainder of the journey, and we had to be content to have achieved the first winter-time motor journey from London to Constantinople so far as we could discover, and the first complete one from London to beyond the Indian border without taking train or crossing unnecessary water anywhere.

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I did also make a curious record. I am the only man in history who has reached Australia from London with only eight days of sea travel. The remainder was all overland, with the exception of the passages of the English Channel, the Bosphorus and the Indus.

I have been perfectly frank about our breakdowns and difficulties and reactions to trouble. Since the car was experimental and without trials, and through force of circumstances we were compelled to take her on her Odyssey without anyone concerned feeling that she was satisfactory for the journey, I have no desire to lay her weaknesses at the door of her makers, who were, I think, fully cognizant of their existence. As, however, the very objective of the journey from their point of view was to place the vehicle in the hands of Australian drivers to drive her as Australians would ordinarily handle her in difficult conditions and to provide a practical lesson from the effects of her treatment for their designers, they are worthy of considerable congratulation for their enterprise in submitting what they knew to be an imperfect machine to tests which would give them certain data from which to construct a perfect one.

I would also ask readers to remember that I do not wish my observations on countries and peoples to be other than the superficial views of a casual observer who, except in two countries, had neither time nor opportunity to delve very deeply into public questions and conditions of life.

My thanks are due to Sir Robert Hadfield, Bart.; to Sir Charles Wakefield, Bart.; Mr. S. H. L. Greaves, Financial Director of Bean Cars, Ltd., of Dudley; to Mr. S. H. Nichols, of Smith & Sons; to Major Martin, of the Overseas Trade Department; Colonel Binns, R.M., of Constantinople; Mr. Tom Field; Mr. Goodall, Director of the Dunlop Rubber Company, Ltd. (India), and the host of other friends who helped and encouraged us.

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Even though we did not succeed, I left behind me a skeleton organization and a basis of information which will lighten the task of any other party attempting the journey in the future. Already, one member of our party, using it, has tried unsuccessfully to achieve the complete journey, but at almost the very outset was compelled to omit 2,000 miles of the direct route from Sofia onwards. My assistance is at the disposal of any other sporting adventurers who care to try.

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EXPRESS TO HINDUSTAN

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF IT

I

THE Adventure began in Park Lane one summer evening as my fellow-Australian friend and I sat over our wine after an early dinner.

It was that mellow hour of English twilight when the owls are coming out in the country and the girls and guardsmen in Hyde Park; when the roar of London is dimmed for a little after the early theatres are filled and a growing weariness has come into the tones of the newsboys crying the evening editions.

Then, it is easy to make romantic plans, for everything is in a half light, and to us, for the moment, it seemed that we were not setting ourselves a task much greater than the organization of an excursion into Surrey.

"Well," said my friend, the Engineer, "suppose I do build a motor-car in England suitable for Australian conditions, how can we test her? Their roads here give no criterion. Their Colonial test course is amusing to an Australian. What is the quickest way of discovering her weaknesses?"

"Drive her across Europe and Asia and down to Singapore or as far as we can get and, if the season is not too late, across Australia," said I light-heartedly.

"Will you carry it through?" said the Engineer.

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"Give me the car by the middle of December, so that I can leave in the middle of January, and I'll try," I said on the spur of the moment.

And, before either of us quite knew what we were about, we were committed to the task. The motor-car, of which the details were only in our brains, was to be built within the next three or four months, and, a few weeks after Christmas time, with what light-hearted spirits I might gather round me, I was to set my course with the experiment for Australia and go as far as she and the rains would let me.

That having been decided, I elected to go home by the "Twopenny Tube" and the Engineer escorted me to Down Street, lest I should get lost on the way.

Next day, he went to the Midlands to talk cars and I went to the British Museum to look at maps, and then we both went to the Midlands. Finally, when all England had gone to Scotland for the shooting, and London had become dusty and brown and hot, everything was settled except detail organization, and, in a grey morning when the mists hung over Croydon, the Engineer waved to me from the cabin of a Paris-bound Imperial Airways aeroplane *en route* for Australia, and left me to the mercy of the British manufacturer and the map-makers.

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We had decided from the outset that the expedition was not to be a noisy, advertising journey. It was to be purely an experiment. There would be no farewells by actresses or potentates; none of the vaudeville which is inseparable from most ventures of the kind. But it is hard to keep a secret, and soon advisers were about me almost as thickly as the problems which beset our preparations.

I needed them.

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It was evident that we should have to start in the dead of winter and who was there to tell me what the winter conditions were over the whole of 11,000 miles of route? The Australian end I knew. The tropical portion I could guess climatically. But the rest was mere mist. There had been three motor parties over the whole or part of the rough course which I mapped to India, only, but at the best season of the year, namely, leaving London in October. Their accounts, however, were so divergent that they could not even agree upon distance. One made it 12,000 miles to Calcutta from London; another 8,000. But the one who had done it in eight so little agreed with map measurement on certain sections where he had taken the train or boat that his figures seemed doubtful, though his aggregate eventually proved fairly correct. The third, who had been to the Indian border 2,000 miles short of Calcutta, with some side-excursions which seemed to total only hundreds of miles, reckoned the distance to Quetta nearly 9,000 miles, while the large scale maps and war-time estimates seemed to put it at about 5,500, which it actually proved to be.

Then, collating the various stories, it appeared that some met in certain places with roads on which they made splendid times, while almost contemporaneous accounts showed that these very spots were the most trackless desert over which only the transcendent super-excellence of a certain make of car and the superhuman sagacity and virility of its drivers made passage possible.

In fact, the only matters on which these universal authorities seemed to agree was that, after Middle Europe, the way was made up of danger piled on danger, hardship on hardship and bandit on bandit. And, when you met the returned local inhabitant and questioned him, his accounts varied almost as much as those of the motorists.

Usually, you found either that custom had staled his sense of the terrible so that he indignantly and sincerely

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denied the local dangers and difficulties even in a mitigated form or else launched, with keenly lighted eye, into an account of forays in which he had been involved there. In that case, he was invariably of pre-war vintage.

When you came to collate your information with maps, confusion built itself on confusion. Where voyagers had found trackless desert sprinkled with banditti there seemed to be British military roads. Where the venturers said nothing of difficulties there seemed to be no roads at all. But, though all this should have been aggravating to the last degree, it was, in a way, the most interesting part of the whole enterprise—the minute gathering, mile by mile, of all pertinent to our intention that was known of Burma and Siam and Malaya; the piecing together over two months' hard work of their village-to-village tracks; the accumulation of bush lore from quiet men who had ruled districts as great as England and as wild as the Solomons or Bismarcks in the seventies, and who had now retired to enjoy their malaria in tiny, winding valleys on the edge of the Surrey heaths, under the shadow of the church spires of their fathers.

Sometimes, one would sit on a high stool in a hostelry where Ben Jonson had revelled, drinking whisky with a grizzled veteran who had seen Theebaw; sometimes, one's hired villain, beaming with unvirtuous satisfaction all over his or her countenance, would slip into the office and whisper: "I couldn't buy it, but I've pinched it." Whereupon there would be hours of poring over some forbidden fruit which had come our way. It is astonishing how easy it is to steal things when you really want them, and, though I officially disapproved of the process and always returned the purloined goods, there was a certain grim amusement in watching the expression of delight which came upon the countenance of at least one young helper when official obtuseness or red tape or private ill-will made it necessary for him to adopt the methods which he described delicately as "resorting to

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the something illegitimate." He hated fixed ownership with all the warmth of a true book collector. Every theft to him was a comparable experience with that triumphant moment in which, having been denied certain route books by a Government Department on the ground of their Profound Secrecy and National Importance, we discovered full copies of them (and all marked, too, with the evidence of the Government opinion of them) reposing on the open shelves of the Library of the Royal Colonial Institute.

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Every man is, at heart, a boy and the pull of adventure never seems to slacken. Little old men in the British Museum who looked as if they had taken the same bag from the same corner, the same hat from its hook, the same bus to the suburbs from time immemorial, became young when our plan was unfolded to them. They brought other old men, entomologists, geologists, lean, wise, untidy ancients, who all became glorified in the beam of recollection as they told you that here was the spot where they were chased by the elephant.

"I'd like to be coming with you," was their universal expression of longing.

But they were no more in a glow than the Oriental Ambassador, of Royal blood, who in his absorption over maps stretched himself full-length on the carpet and pined to me for a large bore rifle and an adjacent tiger.

As the months went on, tall, close-cropped fellows began to drop in casually with a military gait and a fever complexion to whisper that they had heard of what was going forward and ask: "Is there any chance?" And it made your heart bleed to have to say "No." A wistful lot are the English who have exiled themselves from their own land in their youth and been exiled back to it in middle age to spend the rest of their lives pining for

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the outlands. They never wanted money. Some of them were even willing to throw their pensions into the pool. And they didn't care how long it was to take, for time was cheap and the lanes of England narrow and the churchyards stuffy. Just give them a chance—and when you denied it they were very polite and asked you to lunch at some great club in Piccadilly or St. James's Street and said you were an "extraordinarily lucky chap," and, having introduced you some one out of the same mould who remembered with them, to your own momentary extinction, "that blasted night" in Kermanshah, or Canton, or St. Quentin, they wished you good luck like sportsmen and retired, with gentle resignation, to the shadows of their steepled villages, coming back wistfully every little while to ask "how things were going" and hoping, very obviously, that in the meantime somebody in the party had died.

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Lastly, there were the advisers whom I sought myself. One figure stood out among these consultants and I think in stature he was the smallest of them. On a quiet September Sabbath I went to see him down in one of the low counties. My companion of the journey was a former naval officer, a man who, in his time, had earned front pages in the illustrated weeklies and had been decorated by Queen Victoria for something heroic that had happened in Grecian seas, stirring the British world to its depths at the moment and completely forgotten in the present generation. He seemed to have forgotten it himself. His motto was *Ἐκ Νεικοῦς Νίκη*—as one might say "From Striving, Victory"; his motor mascot was the Imp of Lincoln. He drove a motor-car like a midshipman with his first pinnace and he had long since abandoned the practice of firing shells at Britain's enemies to make them for some one else to fire.

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The night before our pilgrimage we went upon the moors of Yorkshire and talked the stars round in their courses, and in the morning we drove through the Dukeries along lanes just greying with the summer heat till we came to the flat lands where the flying men are.

When we had been sitting in a cosy parlour, for a little while, in one of those military cottages in which majors are lodged the British Army world over—except in India, where they are potentates—the usual black-garbed British manservant knocked at the door and announced a name, and forthwith there came into the room a man in a private's blue uniform wearing the badges of a second-class mechanic in the Royal Air Force.

My first thought was how tiny he looked; the second, how young and unlined his face; the third, for the brilliance of his smile and the queer air of unassuming authority which made every one in the room stand up as if something had dragged them to their feet.

Presently, the Major, my host, and the Naval Man, went away and left me with him and we talked—we talked of campaigning in Rolls-Royces and how to get them over straight-sided Wadis; of phosphor bronze connecting rods and the habits of the Arab and the fall of Islam and how when one was thirty-eight and came suddenly into city traffic at forty miles an hour one's hair stood on end a second longer than when one was thirty. (Of course, at forty miles an hour one travels only fifty-eight feet in a second.)

I would have no trouble from Arabs on the Euphrates said the Little Man in Blue, who was known of yore as Lawrence of Arabia. There was no mystery about the Arabs—they were at bottom exactly like ourselves. And then we drifted into other things and he told me how after the war and, worse still, the Peace, he was a worn-out man and decided to take a holiday.

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I searched his face furtively. It was brick red under the neatly cut mop of yellow hair with a curiously symmetrical but at the same time strong lower jaw, a kind mouth and even white teeth. His voice was crisp and cultivated; the diction of his conversation unstudied; his phrasing concise and expressive. An unusual talker interested in everything, full of strange philosophy, lacking the blasé, sated look of the new, post-war generation with a mind that went directly to the kernel of every question, like a lancet in elucidation; obviously, a man who had seen life and formed most of his final conclusions without feeling either that ambition was dead or dullness after world-shaking adventure a thing to fret about.

One moment he was saying: "Just now my job is sweeping floors. If you should ever feel the need of the most appropriate setting for contemplation, buy a broom. It is a most soothing occupation. I can highly recommend it."

"But you have no need to sweep floors," said I, eager to draw him out. "You could be a potentate or a Viceroy. You could succeed in literature, turn Somerset Maugham out of his house in Bryanston Square and appropriate his manservants. As for the lecture platform——"

"I am sweeping floors," said Lawrence of Arabia, "because I have learnt in the East that it is sometimes a greater and more difficult thing to go down than to rise. After all, real life consists in striving to do those things which you find not easy."

An hour later I left him in the sunlight outside the Major's house.

A hundred eager young officers in the Near East who never saw him have since explained variously that he was a madman, a poseur and a lucky dog who had gone walking in Arabia in the right week. But I noticed that the mention of his name stirred the limpness of the new

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forage-capped effendis of Bagdad and that most of them made a respectful sign when he was mentioned.

His name is still a great one in the East among the Arabs and the Turks—a more potent one than that of the contemporary Arab Kings.

5

The year 1926 was blessed with a late summer in England. It was not till October that the trees began to shake their leaves into untidy heaps about the squares. But we had little time to notice the beauty of the autumn, save for swift walks through the Surrey beech woods when one saw nothing but the vision of a red line drawn down the Malay Peninsula or a mind picture of the Turkish Customs regulations. Then the winter closed in and the red line was complete but not neglected, for a great deal of the route was not in the magnificent triangulated maps of the Indian Survey but in the pre-war charts of foreign countries or the hasty, war-time plans of hostile country by the War Office.

The question of men arose. I looked over Heaven only knows how many British drivers, but their technique was all wrong for the kind of work we had in hand. At last, more by chance than anything, I found Knowles. Knowles lived in Yorkshire. He was Australian born, but had been in Great Britain most of his life and the great central fact of his history was the war. A little man like most of the great ones, everything in his existence centred round his experiences in France and Flanders where he had a very gallant and, what was rarer, a very unassuming record. He had been wounded rather severely but he could still sing. He feared nothing but a medical examination. He had won a long-distance reliability motor race against the nations of Europe. He was eager, when there was danger, to the point of indiscipline. His one trouble on the road was that there was

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not more work to do, and whether the temperature was zero or we were up to our knees in snow or hungry or dead-dog tired you could always be certain of the state of one feature of the landscape—of Captain Billy Knowles, a small, dirty British officer, very gay in untidy whiskers and a torn leather coat which he had stolen from me because he insisted that the leader of the party should have his new one in exchange to keep up appearances. There would be a grin on his face and around him the admiring peasantry who in every country became his slaves on the moment while there rose, with the mist of his frozen breath, some profane ditty of the Old Contemptibles:

> Oh, I don't give a damn for Willhi-am,
> For he is blooming-well balmy . . .

Never was a more loyal or willing helper, and when I was compelled through force of circumstances to send him home from Aleppo with important reports which I could not trust to the erratic Near Eastern Post, he made the great sacrifice smiling and with a pun, though leaving the journey half-way through was probably the hardest thing any of us were asked to do. He was a man of Drake or Nelson material was Captain Billy Knowles.

He and I drove across England once or twice and climbed the Beggars' Roost, a slippery clay incline near Exmoor, and the grade of Parracombe, by car. And he rose at Tintagel one morning and scaled King Arthur's Castle walls just to prove that his wind was sound. After that he was of the chosen.

It remained to get one more man and at the crucial moment came a two-line cablegram to the English newspapers that Francis Birtles had broken the Darwin Sydney Record. I had thought of Francis previously, but I had hesitated to send for him because, although he was an excellent driver, a first-class rough mechanic, and had a long record of cross-country motor driving, I did

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not know how he would stand the cold of Europe in winter when suddenly transported from the tropics or how his always belligerent nature would react to the vexations of enforced delays among the teeming population of foreign countries. He had served under my leadership previously on the Twice Across Australia journey in 1924, and we were good friends, so, upon hearing that he was so much at the top of his form, I cabled to him in November when nearly all our arrangements were complete and he arrived on the next mail steamer a rugged figure, in a brown leather coat, who never ventured abroad without a small, russet bag of photographs of his travels which he would display on the least encouragement, and who was apt to astonish the meek tyre manufacturer of England who had never heard of an Overlander, much less of Australia's best known one, by shouting indignantly:

"That's what a man gets for travelling 300,000 miles on your tyres. I'm a King in Australia—the King of Arnheim Land—where no white man has ever been. And you never heard of me!"

"One of these days, Frank," I would say soothingly, "the police will follow you into your Kingdom and collect income tax."

"Let them try it," he would shout fiercely, "I'm ready for them."

The poor Briton on the other side of the desk would look at me as much as to say: "Would it be better to send for the firehose than for the armed constabulary?" and we would stamp out to our motor, from which vantage-point, surveying the landscape of England, now bare of leaves and walled in with mist, Francis would glare and shout:

"Hell of a country! Like driving down a blooming sewer!"

And for the whole of the journey, scarcely a day passed when he did not find something in the Old World to

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disapprove; some one he desired to murder; some consul who needed to be turned into mincemeat for lack of respect to ourselves, the inhabitants of the British Dominions beyond the seas; some country whose loan flotations he proposed to turn into fiascos for evermore with damnatory propaganda. He was our arch-critic of all things Asian and European, for ever pining for clean air.

With his advent, the party was complete. It now remained for us to receive the car and drive away on the journey.

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CHAPTER II

EUROPE IN THE SNOW

I

WE had been promised that the car would be ready in December and that we should be able to leave in January according to carefully laid plans, but when December came there was no car. There were bits of it and there were blue prints—mile upon mile of blue prints. But the aftermath of the coal strike and the difficulty of showing the British manufacturer how over-sea needs were radically different from those of the Midlands, left the experiment only a heap of parts at Christmas time.

Early in January the surroundings of Dudley were disturbed by the hoarse roar of her engine on the test bench, and a week later I travelled one dusky evening to the works and found a tester standing proudly by a chassis, which had a benzine case thrown across it for a seat and six cylinders gently ticking over. We went out in the dusk in this contraption which, through the need of many adjustments natural in a design just out of the egg-shell, several times nearly put us through the hedges. And, when the lanes were dark and the blanket of the close-packed lights twinkled through the Black Country murk, we took her gently back to Dudley and parked her in the square while we sought refreshment and compared notes before the cosy fire of the old Bush Inn.

When we returned to her she was surrounded by small boys.

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"New car?" shouted the small boys. "What's her name? Who made her?"

A new car is an event in the Midlands.

A small, wizened face pushed itself into the gleam of the headlights.

"S.I," read the Face from her radiator plate—it was really "I.S.," for Imperial Six—"S.I."—"That stands for Scrap Iron. That's what she is. Scrap Iron!"

So our vehicle was christened. Scrap Iron she looked with her jury seat, her exposed frame, her rattling, temporary mud-guards, and to us who lived with her, Scrap Iron she remained, sometimes in affection, often in anger. And the longer we had her the more aptly she answered to her pseudonym.

Came a weary time of adjustments; of arguments with mechanics who could not believe that such springs had ever existed as we desired; who smiled at our views on frame distortion; who were apt, indeed, to brush us aside as rather rough Colonials who were impugning British workmanship and British material; who were shocked at our insistence that the success of foreign cars in overseas Dominions was due not merely to their cheapness so much as to their construction. In such an atmosphere, the work dragged slowly and, when it was finished at last, we found ourselves in possession, one Sunday morning, early in February, 1927, of something with twenty-five horse power that was as big as a Rolls-Royce and weighed as much, and which could not be considered except as an experiment from which we might evolve the dream car which we had set out to find.

"If," said we to ourselves, "they will profit by our experiences and our breakages and take the battered wreck when we have finished with it and rebuild it as we wish, the result will probably be well on the way to success."

We spent anxious hours asking ourselves if she would do for us, and eventually, pinning our faith on the engine and our own ability to repair breakages which we expected

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on rough roads, we requisitioned twice the spare parts which we had originally intended to take and got ready to set out.

The delay had had disastrous effects on our plans. I had planned to forestall the bad weather promised in Southern Europe by a hurried dash for Constantinople in the last fortnight of January; thence pushing on night and day to India so as to give a few weeks in hand at Delhi to refit and tackle the wilds of Burma, hitherto untraversed by a motor-car, well before the break of the monsoon.

Now a month—the most valuable month to us—of our schedule had passed and the car had had no trials. She had run fifty-eight miles on the roads—the smooth English roads. She was so little adjusted that her second gear was in the habit of throwing out on steep pinches and her brakes needed replanning to be safe. The snow which I had dreaded had fallen all the way from France to Jerusalem—one of the heaviest and most widespread falls of forty years—and, unless we were quick about our going, we were told that we should encounter first the thaw, which would be almost as bad as the snow, and probably, then, another storm.

We looked at each other.

"We're game," said Knowles. "Anything for a rough life."

"My motto's 'Chance it!' " cried Francis.

So I said I was satisfied to make the trial, and on a dull afternoon we drove out of a desultory crowd in Leicester Square with as little heralding as I could contrive, with an international driving pass and three passports full of weird visas in my valise and slept the night in a hotel above that broad starting line of so many British venturings—the English Channel.

Slept did I say? I, for one, had the remains of some winter malaria and a cracked rib. Knowles was leaving a young family and England, both of which he adored.

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And Francis was starting out on a journey without a dog. He had never before within memory, gone upon a long motor voyage without a dog, and it pained him a good deal more than all the vicissitudes which obviously lay ahead of him.

2

In the morning, a smooth Channel lay before us and with tender care old Scrap Iron was hoisted on to her tray and thence on to the lower deck of a Channel boat. As she weighed nearly three tons loaded, and 37 cwt. unloaded, and was over fifteen feet long from the end of her great, grey bonnet to the petrol filler projecting under her rear tank, she needed care. Then, the "Times" photographer came forward ceremonially and took a photograph of Knowles which he gave the next morning to the eager world as one of myself; a little group of friends and relatives waved; a French gentleman asked us intelligently whether we were going upon a tour, and before there was time to be sad about parting with old England, she was a grey line which one of the new German steamers, coming slowly up the Channel, seemed to be intent upon ramming.

A hasty meal on board; a litre calculation on the Boulogne wharf to make sure that all the petrol arranged for us had been taken in; bowings in competition with many customs officials in blue and scarlet with impressive swords; a little speech from the petrol merchant; another speech from some local well-wisher, and we were on our way with a clear run of 2,000 miles ahead of us before we could expect to be pestered with more water to cross.

"The route for India?" I asked a French customs man jocularly.

"Tout droit," he cried.

"Home, James," I murmured to Knowles, driving.

Grey walls and quays swept by. The road became a ribbon running down long undulations and climbing

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again in a switchback up which we went sailing with the acquired velocity of our downward sweep. A perfect highway, straight for mile upon mile upon mile in a continental air clearer than that of winter England.

Our lungs expanded. Our spirits rose. Some one began to sing that old sea chantey:

> I thought I heard the old man say
> Good-bye, fare ye well.
> We're homeward bound with twelve months' pay!
> Good-bye, fare ye well.

Very close home and Australia seemed for the moment, just as often home has seemed near to a million sailors who have bellowed that old song only to end among the coral on the way. The speed grew until I was compelled to curb every one's exuberance with a warning. The sun shone as we had not seen it shine for weeks. The afternoon drifted away in steady miles ticked off in unaltering style along the unaltering road. As we moved into the heart of France, names became historic and the villages acquired a new look, strange to the old world. The roads had the appearance of just having been built; the trees of just having been planted. There was a town called Arras which we seemed to have heard of and which had evidently only now come into the world and there were villages called Peronne and Bapaume which looked as if they had been transported from one of the newer districts of Australia with fresh painted buildings and everything obviously newly risen from the wilderness. Now and then there were signs that at one time or another some persons unknown had amused themselves digging a broad gutter around these parts and sowing a little barbed wire in front of it. But, in the main, the land was ploughed and smooth, with clean, neat cottages and barns and lately planted trees and highways which had had no time to rid themselves of a mire of constructive dust.

Occasionally, an ordered cemetery lay white on a hill-

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side, or a ruined church spire pierced the distance against the cold sky of the north. Night fell upon us suddenly, smeared ahead with lights that were Laon, and it grew so cold that we wrapped our scarves high above the collars of our leather coats and sealed the car against the wind, as we pushed on for Rheims. At half-past ten we found it, dark, silent, but with a welcoming glow in the windows of the Hôtel Splendide.

We were all in high spirits—so high that there was quite a competition for Room Number 13 which in the end fell to my lot—a chamber so warm and sleep-producing with its great bed and coverlet of goose-feathers that the garçon commanded to wake me at 4.30 a.m., thought I was a fit subject for the undertaker when he came with steaming coffee and rolls.

He seemed quite disappointed about it. "I thought the monsieur was dead," said he. "But no! Nothing ever happens here now. Once every one here was dead. Ah, the good old war!"

He went out, sighing, to clean boots.

3

All day the smooth road swept under us, mile on mile of monotony broken by wet and winding village streets full of pigs and cows and straw and waggons and peasant women trudging homewards from the market-towns. Our only trouble was with the car itself which protested in several small ways at being taken from her homeland. Once her carburation went hopelessly wrong; and once a short circuit, which set up a smouldering behind the driving seat within a couple of feet of eight gallons of petrol, ended in a pell-mell rescue scene, Knowles working like a madman to throw obscuring goods from the seat of the fire and Birtles and I using our united strength to pry loose the Pyrenes from the brackets into which the genius who had fitted them had jambed them so that they held like part of the frame.

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We bought petrol in Châlons from a red-cheeked girl. The great, bald, war-stripped hills of the Argonne swooped into view. We ran through dusty, bare Verdun not yet quite rebuilt and began climbing into the hills and the snow and those regions where the keepers of estaminets, rescued from the Hun in Alsace-Lorraine, preferred to speak German to French because it had been their native language for fifty years. We became lost in the intricacies of Metz and at dusk crossed the Rhine at Strasburg straight into the arms of a large, green uniformed customs officer with the air of a commissaire.

"You must unload everything from your car," said the customs officer.

"Nothing of the sort," said I. "I have a customs carnet."

"I cannot help that," muttered the commissaire. "It is forbidden that motor-cars should pass the border without examination."

We argued it out. I went to the customs office to find the commissaire's superior, leaving him to argue with Francis and Knowles, neither of whom had one word of German to conduct their side of the disturbance.

The inside atmosphere proved more hopeful.

"The man is a fool," said the Superior Officer, what time he dexterously examined two pounds of sausages and a dead turkey which a lady had bought in Strasburg across the bridge and was submitting for examination. "Welcome to Kehl. (Yes, good mother. You may go. I have a good mind to take that turkey, it is so fat.) I will stamp your papers at once. (Tobacco, Willi? Why don't you buy your tobacco in Germany? Is the Kehl tobacco yet not so good that you must buy the French?) You are free forthwith, sir."

I offered a tip. He drew himself up.

"You are in Germany now," he said stiffly. "This is not one of those Latin countries. Here, as in England, you must not tip customs officers. It is forbidden!"

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I found the commissaire and a voluntary interpreter who had nearly nine words of English to his name still debating with the party.

"Happy mealtime!" they cried as we drove down the street to bed and Schnitzel à la Holstein.

4

Came a dead slumber changing into all the cold in the world upon finger-tips left outside the coverlet. Came morning and a very German street with high, sloping eaves and precise policemen and hay-waggons and contented-looking waggoners and a population trudging steadily and soberly to work at an hour which would make our Australian workmen think they had stepped back into the Middle Ages. That was Germany. We soon grew accustomed to seeing people going to work in the dawn and the astonishing thing about it was that they all seemed so happy.

You stayed in a town and the approach of daylight brought the muffled patter of artisans' feet; or, if you did not hear them, you looked out of the window and saw shuffling figures bowed before the snowy blast. And in the evening, you met them again in the early dark plodding home, to see them even later, sometimes, come trampling into the village inn with knitting or toys to be painted or some other labour to be done. You would nod to them and they would nod to you and all their fellows would begin to sing, till presently the inn became a very factory, full of the clicking of needles and rafter-shaking choruses, every table shining with the golden glow of beer in tall glasses or fantastic with steins. No wonder that the mark has become stable in Germany and prices are below London prices, everywhere. No wonder that the workmen has his beer for a penny less than the Englishman and a roll of bread and sometimes a bit of cheese with it for discount.

The German workman, having fought and lost, has

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worked for his comfort and, hate as you may his country's past and suspect it as you must of bolstering up Russia, you cannot but admire the cheerfulness with which its inhabitants suffer their long hours in a bitter winter climate and the carnival spirit, so different from the sour complainings of the provincial French, with which they have met their troubles.

Moreover, it was strange to find that, where in Northern France at that time a Briton was suspect as a tentacle of the world octopus—Albion, whose uncharity towards her allies and self-seeking greed had supposedly caused the collapse of the franc—to call yourself English in Germany was to be treated as a friend. Curiously enough, the British and the German attitudes to each other had much in common. The ordinary, simple people in both countries seemed only too willing to forgive, if not to forget. The French, perhaps naturally—one cannot judge them—have wiped the word "forgive" out of their dictionaries where the Germans are concerned. To an Australian, the Gallic attitude seemed the extreme of bitterness and the British and German rank and file attitudes rather the other extreme.

However, there was nothing but kindness for us in the ex-enemy countries and we were not long in Germany before we needed it. For here we came upon the edge of the snowfall.

5

I had intended to climb straight over the mountains through the Black Forest to the valley of the Neckar, but the Black Forest was all white and its roads snowed up.

Instead, we started up the Rhine Valley towards Karlsruhe, along smooth roads, with the trees beside us frosted like Christmas trees and the air full of the jingle of sleigh bells, and the village ponds with the ice cracking upon them. At every *Dorf* the snow was piled very

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high at the corners and the ducks lifted their feet straight up and put them down with very obvious reluctance. Then, at Ratstatt, I swung off the main road to Ettlingen and thence we climbed to a thawing Pforzheim.

Each minute saw us higher and more among timber. The architecture of the towns and villages became more and more quaint and mediæval—tall turrets, axe blade roofs to let the snow slide off, inns in which the lower stories were given over to the cattle; castles perched on peaks and, now and then, snow torrents between dark pine woods from which you momentarily expected to see a gnome in his red cap and long hose, come hopping with his tiny miner's pick. Trudging oxen slid as they hauled their sleighs. The ancient university town of Tübingen was bright with coloured banded student caps, and dangerous with wet, winding, mountain streets.

Then, Reutlingen and Urach with their tortuous alleyways and polite policemen and corner houses weighed down with verbotens for motor lorries and waggons and motor-cars and all the other wicked of the transport world.

The country opened out, at length into long fields of snow obscuring hedges and fences, sometimes two feet deep on the road, sometimes piled beside it in blocks. Near dusk we were at the village of Böhringen hoping to reach Ulm before dark.

Suddenly, we came to the edge of the woods. The snow was very deep. The slope was very steep. The air was thick with half-hearted, slow-falling flakes. The night when we had struggled with the slippery hill for an hour grew dark, the wind was cold and our clutch was behaving as if it were infirm and old instead of only born a few weeks before.

It refused to hold. Furthermore, when we put chains on the car, they, too, refused to hold. One of them just sank into the icy surface and stayed there, and surely Germany never saw a profaner sight than the crew of

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IN SOUTH GERMANY

PUTTING THE CHAINS ON

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the Scrap Iron searching for it in the rut which they had left.

After three hours' struggle we gave up hope of moving and sat down to hot coffee and plans. There was room for one man to sleep comfortably in the car, and I resolved that Knowles, being the smallest, should be that one, more especially as it gave me a chance to judge him in vicissitude. Francis I took with me to the nearest village, intending that early morning should see us on our way back with shovels and aid to move us out of the drift into which the car had sunk to the floor boards by the time we left her.

As we went, I looked back to see her, a dark blot on a white field from which there followed us down the trail the discordant voice of the watchman:

> O, we'll be in luck when we meet Von Kluck
> And all his flaming Army!

Even marooned in Bavaria at the mercy of the Hun, Captain Billy had not forgotten that he was in the first armies of Flanders.

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CHAPTER III

FROM GERMANY TO MOHACS FIELD

I

THAT was an eventful night. Snow began to fall as we slid and slithered and staggered into Böhringen which was frosted like a cake and shining with indescribably unwinking lights. The drift was so deep that the patter of our soles was smothered in an uncanny silence which hung over the deserted streets. One heard the uneasy shuffling of beasts within on their straw and girlish laughter and the clink of steins; now and again a dog's growling—in fact all the ordinary vocalization of life. But nothing moved outside except the flakes drifting down about us and the blue smoke of the chimneys staggering uncertainly into the high, grey night.

I chose a Gasthaus, with its strangely lettered front, now a mere silhouette of high gables, and rang the bell which echoed and pealed till the last notes might well have struck the ramparts of the Pyrenees. After an interval, which well served to keep the illusion of the sound's great range, footfalls came creeping down the passage and the door opened with a great clanging of bolts and bars. The human engine which achieved its opening was a fat man with a blue knitted waistcoat, knee breeches and a shawl round his neck.

Two beds? said he. No; there were not two beds. There was a ski-ing party there and not even one bed to spare. No; we could not sleep in the passage or in the

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tap-room. There was nothing to eat. There was no beer because all the steins were in use.

He had the impudence to shout as he shut the great portal: "Schlafen Sie wohl!" Then he opened it again a trifle to call: "Try the 'Golden Bullock.'" After which, he finally sealed us into outer darkness with much grunting and clanging of chains.

We tried the "Golden Bullock," but it was without the milk of human kindness. The snow fell thicker. A sleigh, a-jingle with bells, came up the street behind a mist-blowing horse, and its bowed driver in his bearskin and cape looked just like old St. Nicholas. I hailed him.

"Try Frau Lamb's," he advised.

Frau Lamb's was a humbler inn than the rest. The air was warm in its doorway from the breath of many cattle stalled inside, and very evidently the family pig was having trouble with his bedfellows, the chickens. Incongruously adjacent to the bickering animals somebody with a loud voice was proclaiming musically that who loved not woman, wine and song he was a fool his whole life long.

"And," he added, after enjoining all and sundry within to join in the chorus, "fools we are not no-ho-no. No fools we are not no-o-o-o!"

Obviously, the byre and the tap-room almost adjoined.

An elderly, plain woman neatly dressed came to the door and in a minute we had been transported 13,000 miles. If somebody had said: "To-morrow you will turn over in the dark of your room and find yourself in the Rosewood Range in Queensland, and hear the Brisbane goods train roaring through in the dark and the first German waggons trundling down the hill," I should have believed and replied: "Yes! presently the sun will rise over Perry's Nob and I shall look down on the chessboard of the Lowood Valley and the roofs of Kirchheim where all the Germans made a community years ago and bred many sons who are now Australians and

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fought cheerfully against the German land which they had never seen for the integrity and continuance of their own new country."

These peasantry were very much the type of their emigrant confrères—the bearded father, the poorly clad farm children, the neat housewife. The only person out of place in the scene was the vocalist who looked like the village constable and who, between many songs, cheered us with the glad news that he was not going home any more; no, he was never going home but he was going to have another drink. Which he did—several of them.

They brought us steaming soup and dark bread and cheese and beer and a molten tot of brandy, while I told our adventures and we were led to two immense beds in a story above where the night was full of the warm scent of kine. Dimly through a frosted pane we saw the ceaseless, white driving of the snow.

It made you feel mean in your blankets to think of poor Knowles marooned out in the car. Drowsy with food and drink I made a firm resolution that at the earliest streak of daylight, I would take three strong men and a shovel and dig him out.

A shovel? What was the German for shovel? I had forgotten.

The knowledge of this unimportant gap in my power of expression sat down on me like a ton load and I fell asleep to dream an awful nightmare in which the bearded host of the "White Lamb" stood in front of a mountain of the most hopeless bits of ironmongery while I, impotent and futile, raved in front of him shrieking "Not that! Not that!"

In the morning I said to him:

"Can you find me something to remove the snow from round my car?"

"Ah, yes," said he, "ein Schauffel."

Even Francis understood it.

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Then said the host, when he had fed us with hot rolls and coffee and fat bacon:

"One shovel will not be enough. You must take my two sons to dig you out. You will need them."

Whereupon, with these sturdy young men leading, we strode away to reach the car. One of the young men said he knew a short cut across the fields. It meant climbing over some hills, he said, but that did not matter. After half a mile, we, and especially I, who had a broken rib well shored up, most heartily disagreed with him. Sometimes, the drifts were deep above one's knees. Occasionally, you rolled down a bank and then, again, you might find yourself on a hard slide with a mere veil of slippery powder on top. All the soft snow was crusted and, when you sank through it, the icicles got into your shoes and your feet were wet through and the perspiration poured off you with every dragging step, for the sun was beating down on the snowfield with a tropical heat. Before long, we were all resting every few yards and our pace slowed down to a mile an hour, Francis Birtles at his most profane, two hundred yards in the rear, but in no danger of getting lost because of his indignantly noisy expressiveness.

2

An hour of this saw us scrambling up the hill-side where the car had been the night before. Now, there was no Knowles. There was no car. There was no evidence whatever of her having moved. If she had moved, I judged that she would have had to come down the hill, for I was perfectly sure that she could not have got out of the mess going forward under her own power. There was no doubt about her having been there. She had not fallen into a twelve-foot drift at the roadside, as anxious probing proved. All that remained of her apparently was a hole in the ice where we had let the water out of her radiator the night before and which was

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revealed after we had shovelled away the snow on the roadway in a search for clues.

While we were engaged intently on this task we were warned by a feminine shriek and a very fair not to say fat damsel arrived among us seemingly out of the air on skis. She pulled herself up in sixty or seventy feet and came back to us.

"Has the well-born lady seen a lost gentleman with a motor-car?" I asked.

No; the well-born lady had not. She had been there since seven o'clock in the morning and she said slangily that never a gentleman had she seen except her uncle who was down the road. She opined that possibly the gentleman had eloped or that the devil had got him.

As for Uncle, speaking in very fast German, as one upon his trial for having abducted our lost outfit, he swore not only that he had not seen a waggon—so they speak of motor-cars in Germany—but that there could never have been a waggon because he would have seen it or its chainmarks if there had been.

With bowed heads we tramped back to Böhringen—this time along the road—and half-way there, came upon chain tracks on a piece of hard snow. We tracked them to the door of the "White Lamb," comforting ourselves with visions of Knowles sitting in the *Speisesaal* of that jolly hostelry, singing about von Kluck and the country's late Emperor in the most disrespectful terms. The "White Lamb" had not seen him.

The plot thickened. We telephoned Zainingen and Urach and other towns and consulted the police. Eventually we consulted Dröttingen. It appeared that there was a strange gentleman at that salubrious village with a motor-car. He was at the inn and at that stage the telephone gave out.

All Böhringen, which had taken us to its bosom, came out to see us leave, for our good hostess insisted that she would have us driven over in her own sleigh under a

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bearskin rug and not one penny would she take for her trouble or her husband or any of her big, shy, agricultural sons who, save for the one driving us, stood in a stiff and respectful row and bowed so that one could almost hear them creak as we swung down the street with all our bells sweetly pealing.

3

Knowles was not at Dröttingen. But he had been there. There was no doubt about it. He had disappeared, but he had become a pleasant legend to every one except the host of the inn who, on sight, we pronounced to be the most unpleasant type of Prussian, avaricious, truculent, offensive. The remainder of the village was not any of these things. It looked as if it were recovering from a long night out.

It had plenty of evidence to give of the existence of Knowles. Firstly, it had the car in a draughty cowshed, its disc wheels plated with ice; stalactites hanging from its axle; its general appearance that of a vehicle which had been to the North Pole and done its journey not wisely but too thoroughly. Next, there was a very crowd of testimony, and finally there was the bill. In the warm *Saal* of the inn, with guttural boys and girls who had come in from ski-ing all round us, I held a court of inquiry and sifted the evidence.

It appeared from what they said combined with Knowles's own later emendations that on the previous evening, a bullock wain was delayed in the snow and, about midnight, had almost collided with a dark object which it found to be old Scrap Iron. While it was trying to avoid this obstruction an officer, whom its peasant conductor did not in the least understand, got out of the car and shouted:

"Come on, George, hitch up!" or words to that effect, with very effective pantomime. The peasant had no desire to hitch up. He wanted to get home but there

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was an officer; and what could one do when an officer, especially an English officer (who might have been French and a member of the Patrol which was still in occupation of the Rhine Zone a few miles away), began barking orders. So, the bullocks were unspanned and tied to the motor-car (mark you, sir, it was already midnight!), and they pulled and pulled and nothing happened.

"But, dammit," the Well-Born Officer said, "these are no bullocks, they are caterpillars. Imshi! Raus! Get more bullocks!"

The peasant said he would like to be excused; all this conversation was, of course, conducted in half-sign language. The Well-Born Officer said he'd see his rabbits dead before that happened. Then he climbed into the waggon and sang songs all the way into Drŏttingen, where all the population, except a number of ribald youths and maidens who were dancing at the inn or otherwise engaged, were in bed. The Well-Born Officer sat on the steps of the inn when they refused to let him enter and sang a song which they thought referred to the Kaiser and Marshal von Kluck, and when the innkeeper and the police remonstrated with him all he would do was to shout:

"Bullocks! Oxen! Moo cows—blast your eyes!"

Eventually, they thought that, in the interest of public peace and the temperature of their own marrows, they had better continue the discussion inside.

At this point the village collectively looked at each other and held its head.

"Well, what happened then?" I queried.

"Noble Herr," whined the landlord, "the gentleman had no money. He wrote this in my book. He said the Ober Kommandant of the Royal King George Official Government Motor-Car Expedition" (this our wandering one had written in the book) "would settle when he arrived. I trust your worship will yet pay this score."

The score read as follows:

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DRÖTTINGEN

A LITTLE GERMAN HAS A RIDE

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"To 17 gallons of mild and bitter . . . 23 marks
To umpteen bullocks and seven men . . 30 marks
"Please charge to reparations.
"ERIC WALTER KNOWLES."

So that was that. It was very evident that our companion was a man of resource and grit. But where was he? I asked the crowd at large.

"He hass yet valking gone to Hohenzollern," said a voice in broken English on the outskirts.

"To Hohenzollern?" Hohenzollern was only a few miles away.

"Yess. He say he go Hohenzollern."

And that was all we could get. Francis was already at work in the cowshed adjusting the clutch, with an admiring crowd round him. His feet were in the air and he was holding a monologue in Australian blackfellow pidgin-English, having already solved all his language difficulties by an instinctive division of the peoples of the world into two classes—those who understood English and savages only fit to be addressed in pidgin-English. It had its convenient side, for nobody ever answered him back.

I had barely reached the shed when there were shouts of welcome outside and much laughter, which indicated that our wanderer had returned. He had gone to Zainingen, thinking it to be Böhringen, in a futile search for us, and he was as merry as a cricket. So far had he won the hearts of Dröttingen that wherever he went a crowd followed him as if he had been the Pied Piper, and without a word of German he kept them laughing all the time.

He had small boys pumping up our full balloon tyres in shifts. He had other small boys breaking the ice off the undergear and boiling water for us in the kitchen, and he and I kept up a fire of badinage and were in high spirits when the policeman arrived. The policeman was very evidently suffering from a very sore head, but we

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soon had him in a proper frame of mind helping with the rest. By four o'clock in the afternoon we were ready to leave. I fought the war over again with the Prussian host and, so to speak, reduced our indemnity to him for bullocks and beer by half, to his intense annoyance, and, amid "Hochs" and "Lucky Journeys" and much rude village wit, we slipped out in the gathering gloom of the afternoon on our way to Ulm.

4

At eight o'clock we were housed across the Danube in a great, brick hotel whereof the dining-room was given over to the revels of a *Narrenfest* (Fool's Masquerade). The famous Charles Chaplin has nothing on a Schwabian Narr. He wears a round, felt, black hat and a false nose with a few artificial warts indiscreetly plastered over a leering and inoffensively drunken greasepaint countenance. His badge of foolhood is a raw potato on a stick and he appears to have free licence to be funny at everybody's expense. Generally, he seemed to be an attractively innocent rustic, with hollow legs, designed to hold unlimited refreshment, and the evening in his ribald company, not to mention the company of lashings of good food, was a pleasant ending to a hard, cold day.

In the morning the brakes were frozen on every car in the hotel garage; our oil was frozen in its tins. The Danube outside was a sheet of ice. The engine was stone cold, and though we struggled nearly the whole morning through, we might as well have been trying to revive a corpse for all the good we achieved. At length I set out to buy kerosene for priming, an operation rendered difficult by the fact that the names of all oil fuels vary so much round the world that you are never sure what the local name may be. Petrol in England is benzine so soon as you cross the Channel. Kerosene in Australia is paraffin in England. Paraffin in England, it appeared, after several attempts at explanation, was

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petroleum in Ulm, that ancient town where the city council has so clean a record that it is able to immortalize its civic deeds (nicely coloured with aldermanic conceit) on the outer walls of its Town Hall.

It was an attractive old city full of mediæval towers and modern beershops clustered round the tallest church spire in the world, yet unable to provide the poor motorist with an efficient tyre pump, though he called the police to his aid to search for one.

After lunch-time, with the help of priming and a benzine blow-lamp to warm the engine and much hard work with combined starting-handle and self-starter, we were on the road; we were in Augsburg with its towers; we were in many wet villages full of geese and the smell of mingled hay and beer and, finally, in a hotel in Munich.

Knowles and I went to see Munich that evening. Said I to him:

"We had better take the name of our hotel."

"I have it," said Knowles.

"Good man," said I.

We went to several beer halls. We had *dunkles Brau* and *helles Brau*, impartially. At ten o'clock we started for home.

After we had gone some distance, Knowles said suddenly:

"Look here, old man, am I drunk?"

"Not more than usual. Why?"

"Well, we've passed half a dozen hotels and they are certainly none of them the one we are staying at, but they all appear to have the same name as our own. I can't make it out."

"What is the name?"

"Why, Hotel Eingang. I wrote it down most carefully in my notebook. What's the matter with you?"

"'Hotel Eingang' is German for 'Hotel Entrance.'"

Fortunately, German beer is not very strong and the ways of Munich are not more than ordinarily devious.

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CHAPTER IV

CUSTOMS, MORE CUSTOMS AND THE FROZEN LANDS

I

EUROPE slipped away in a procession of ancient cities. We traversed tracts where black asphalt had been covered with a film of grey ice. We ate in wet hamlets; again, in the gaiety of Vienna. We had the mediæval spectacle of Salzburg where one might not have been astonished to see knights in black armour riding out to war with fluttering pennons served up to us. We drank scented tea in furtive village inns where a reasonable man might not have unjustly expected to be robbed and murdered. Munich gave place to Hohenlinden and its snow; Germany to Austria with more snow, and Austria to Hungary.

It was a work of ceremony getting into Hungary.

(1) The Austrian Border Police, housed in a tiny hut, sent us to the Austrian Customs Authority, housed in a railway carriage, who stamped our carnet and

(2) sent us back to the Border Police, who inspected everything they could lay their hands on and left me to the tender mercies of

(3) the Hungarian Border Police, who had only five words of German and no English, French or Italian. Their Chief and I carried on a conversation which neither of us understood until a carter was requisitioned as interpreter. After which, we were sent to

(4) the Travel Control Office, a mile away, where the united staff, very resplendent in new uniforms,

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AT HOHENLINDEN

HOHENLINDEN

"When the sun was low
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow."

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cross-examined me as to my ancestry, means of livelihood and other matters of moment in the presence of two enormous soldiers in cock's-feathered hats whose fixed bayonets were impressive. The party was just considering an expedition to rescue me from the Hungarians when I was ordered to proceed to

(5) the Hungarian Customs Office, which finally bade me go, after another inquisition and a ceremonial use of rubber stamps.

We drove on in the dusk and as fast as a troublesome carburettor would allow us; slept in Gyor; whirled into Budapest, that majestic double city on the Danube, home of lovely women and picturesque policemen and a delightful system of tolls; dashed off again on the best piece of road we had seen since leaving England and, lo, in the dark of our ninth day out from London, limped into Mohacs near the Jugo-Slavian border with our first puncture from a horseshoe nail and our radiator leaking because its builders had given it only a single shell which had already pounded itself into holes on its brackets. A single-shell radiator is all very well for the billiard-table roads of England; on any track with a few bumps in it its life is apt to be short.

Mohacs! What a town! Four hundred years ago a war was lost on Mohacs field, and the man who won it seemed to be still parading down the long, wind-blown street which ended on the flat banks of the Danube. He was wearing a cowhide coat with the hair inside and the parchment of the exposed hide delicately painted with flowers. This impressive cloak was set off with an enormous, curved cavalry sabre and moustachios which might well have come out of the "Bab Ballads." It proved only to be the local constable, who, majestic in the evening, was doubly so in the morning with a heavily armed companion, as he paraded among the market women in their Macedonian costumes of queer short skirts and amazingly coloured stockings. It was

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quite a sight to see these latter clamber down from waggons drawn by smart-stepping horses and driven by pleasant-faced Hungarian Cossacks in black lamb's-wool caps and long hide coats as much beflowered as those of the policemen.

2

The street presented a busy scene, full of colour and the rattle of fine harness and the clop-clop-clop of hooves on cold paving, but it was nothing in animation to some of the scenes in which we ourselves shared that day. At dawn the maid of all work flung open my door and asked agitatedly for our passports. Our after-dark arrival had led me to leave them locked in their compartment in the car, so I merely yawned and said:

"Oh, they're in the automobile. I'll get them later. What time's breakfast?"

I solemnly went to sleep again. In ten minutes entered the manager.

He dug me in the ribs.

"Reisepasse!"

"Go to Booligal! I'll get them after breakfast."

I rolled over once more, mine host regarding me sadly. I had just dozed when Knowles put his uncouth head round the door, approached me reverently, drew himself up, clicked his heels and announced in a voice which he conceived suitable to impress the Balkan population:

"Sir, the Hungarian Army has arrived. Cavalry in massed formation in the passage."

Outside, I heard the voice of Francis saying, in black-fellow pidgin: "Oh, he plenty big mob good feller sword, eh?" Then, a sabre clanked on the boards in a stony silence.

Two booted and sabred policemen came in. The flowers on their cloaks looked more magenta than the night before and they twirled their moustaches with unconscious ferocity. Through the half-open doorway

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I beheld the landlord, his maid and a fellow-lodger who was arrayed in sheepskins and a black felt hat, all gathered to enjoy the slaughter, so that it was somewhat of an anti-climax when the bigger of the police, a hairy fellow with the manner of a full member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Assassins, bowed low and asked in the squeakiest voice that ever issued from the mouth of a big man:

"Would the Herr be so kind as to show us his passport?"

I groaned.

"But it is early yet? Will not after breakfast do?"

"Early! Why, the sun is up half an hour!"

Obviously, we were in hard-working Europe, not in our own lazy land, so I crawled out of bed and gathered our papers together, whereupon it became plain why the police had begun their day at dawn. They wanted plenty of daylight ahead in which to deal with me. At last we had permission to go to the border post.

It only remained to pay the bill and do a little purchasing of necessaries. Buying goods is a splendid exercise for the mentality in Mohacs, the currency being in a state of flux. In the old coinage which is current, 12,500 koronas equal one old pengo and 100 koronas of the new coinage equal one new pengo. So that when you go into a shop and the lady in charge says magnificently: "That will be 263,478 koronas" and you are armed with Jugo-Slavian money, which is, alas, good tender in border towns and which you have bought in Budapest with new pengos, so many to the dinar, you need a wet towel and a table of logarithms to complete the deal.

Also, if the lady is excitable, a crowd is apt to collect.

3

I felt quite proud when ten o'clock saw us on the way to the border. It was guarded by a boy in sheep-

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skins on the Hungarian side with a long and carefully polished bayonet. On the other side, outside a mean hut, two hairy persons were gazing at Hungary, and incidentally at us, with an air of disconcerting hate.

Our soldier came close to us and placing the bayonet point about an inch from my chest said: "Back!"

We backed. He got on to the footboard and guided us, in our tracks, to a village a mile on the Mohacs Road.

"But you must go to Mohacs again," said the cheerful Commandant here, who was a Count. "You have not passed customs."

Crestfallen we went back to pass customs. I left the dreary Zollamt on the bank of the Danube to find a crowd round the car and the radiator leaking like a sieve.

We mended it with white lead and lit out for the border to meet our friend the border Commandant again. We approached his house streaming water from the bottom of the radiator and blowing it out at the top. It was an impressive sight, and it seemed to fill him with delight.

"Ah," he cried, "this is nothing. Motor-cars are our hobby here. Yes! My boys and I, we have taken this car"—indicating an ancient French vehicle—"to pieces nine times."

He halloed and the garrison came out with their soldering irons. They had that radiator off in seven minutes, and in an hour and a half it was soldered and we had had wine to drink and had been introduced to the lady of the house and bowed upon our road to Belgrade.

At the border we were handed to the custody of the hairy Jugo-Slavians and the weary game of entry began all over again.

The sentries examined us and borrowed tobacco. The customs officers a hundred yards along went through us and stamped our papers. Lastly, one of them (with

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THE DANUBE

HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS MENDING OUR RADIATOR

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bayonet) took us to Monastir and handed me over to a Major-General in blue with red stripes and facings.

We had a pleasant and intimate chat about my past—so satisfactory that he evidently felt I ought to be introduced to his friends. Wherefore, he led me across the yard to another Major-General in khaki. Between them they produced a large book of regulations and engaged in what seemed to be an equity session, what time a third high officer hung seals all over the car and then stood in the sun picking his teeth and seemingly meditating whether it would not be a good idea also to hang lead discs on Knowles and Birtles.

Presently a bright idea struck him and he came inside bringing with him two Colonels and a Brigadier, who all asked me questions in loud voices. This took time, but eventually they went back to the big, black book like crows to a corpse.

"How much money have you got?" asked the loudest of them.

I had about seven pounds sterling in dinars and I indiscreetly said so.

The General Staff immediately drew a long breath. The air rang with the German equivalents for: "For the stamp, sixty dinars," "Give seventy-five dinars to the soldier," "My duty is ninety dinars," and when I recovered from the financial blows of the next twenty minutes, I found myself with the following negotiable wealth:

Cooks' cheques uncashable before Belgrade, 160 miles away.

4000 Hungarian koronas, old style, worth about twopence.

1 French franc.

3 modern pengos.

2½*d.* sterling.

3 tokens from a London club worth eighteen-pence.

4 Austrian postage stamps.

9*d.* in Jugo-Slavian money.

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I left hastily lest a Field Marshal, who had arrived late and had missed the earlier distribution of spoils, should discover the ninepence worth of dinars. Several hours afterwards a toll official found it, and when he refused to allow us to enter his township without paying, I handed him the whole of our coin and paper with the most magnanimous gesture I could invent and drove on while he was still in a state of coma.

4

None of us who suffered it are ever likely to forget our first day and night in Jugo-Slavia. All the country hereabouts is long, alluvial plains stretching down to the Danube and the Save. They are bleak and open with little timber on them, and for cold I have never met anything to match them. The wind whistled through our leather coats and heavy woollen clothes as if they had been so much cheesecloth. The earth road which a few days before had been a slough cut up by waggon tracks had frozen hard into the vilest kind of "devil devil" country. It was exactly like driving over a field of stalagmites.

At sundown the wind dropped; the air seemed to become stifling and freezing at once. One had all the sensations of being enclosed in block ice.

With my cracked rib and a dose of malaria I was fast becoming thoroughly ill, and our troubles grew when the radiator began to leak in a stream and at the same time to boil with cold and altitude. Every half-hour we were compelled to patch up some fresh hole with white lead and at the wretched villages every three or four miles we had to refill with water.

I had no desire to camp in any of the villages because we had been warned that they were full of influenza and death. Furthermore, to stop meant to have to start a frozen engine in the morning since there were no garages anywhere. By eight o'clock I had been reduced to a

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shivering heap by the malaria, but I decided that we must push straight on to Belgrade. So, wrapping myself up in blankets in the rear of the car, I left the other unfortunates to do the hard work while I read the map and asked the way and vomited whenever I felt inclined.

We had none of us seen such bleak and dreary country —the frozen plains, the dark oak groves, the puddles that had become solid ice and early in the evening in ill-lighted streets, low taverns where the inhabitants, once subjects of Austria, sang fierce German songs of rebellion against the Serbian domination. We felt sorry for these poor wretches till a few of them had put us on wrong tracks, and at 3 a.m., with both Birtles and Knowles exhausted and our lights reduced to a dim flicker, I was forced to give the order to camp on the banks of the Danube, where we lay, the three of us huddled together with chattering teeth, until the morning, too frozen and aching to move and too cold to sleep.

At dawn we rose and I made a fire from sodden oak branches. When the mist had dissipated itself, a strange scene met our eyes. We might well have imagined that we had stepped into some story from Grimm's Fairy Tales.

To our right lay a marshy backwater of the Danube solidly frozen over. To the left a dark forest of great oaks free of undergrowth; in the distance a white village from which herdsmen garbed in the painted hide coats and strapped gaiters of the district already came loitering behind their herds of pigs, which they were taking out to grub and eat acorns in the forest.

Now and then a rattling waggon went by with fine horses blowing steam and the driver's family wrapped in furs on clean straw behind the driving seat, presumably bound for early church.

When we had broken the ice of the Danube with a four-pound hammer and scooped out enough of the

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pig filth underneath to make some foul coffee, I stopped four wayfarers and asked the way to Belgrade. Each had a different story, and I soon came to the conclusion that, though these simple folk were living within less than forty miles of the capital, few of them had ever been there.

We settled down to thaw the radiator which had frozen so quickly the night before that, even with its many leaks, we had been unable to drain it and had barely begun when we had a hail in the American language. It came from a large and villainous-looking Pittsburg "wop" who had returned to his native heath. He declared that he knew the way to Belgrade very well; that it lay through the village and that he would wait there and direct us. He then gave us some directions which I felt would lead us straight away from Belgrade unless, in the darkness, I had lost all sense of the lie of the land the night before. (The sun, of course, was not visible.)

I gave him time to reach the village and then followed him cautiously. The road was virtually made up of jagged pieces of frozen mud, and with my civilized shoes I slipped and slithered all over the place, while my heels, stripped bare of skin by the walk in the snow at Böhringen, were soon bleeding. Several times I had nasty falls until I secured a staff to steady myself.

All along the road the swineherds were blowing their pipes to their long-snouted pigs which all seemed to grow wool on their backs like merino sheep. A covering of some sort was undoubtedly necessary, for when I left the car the temperature was 4° above zero, Fahr.

The village was mediæval. It had no written shop signs. Its people stared as if I were a being from another world and, when I spoke to them, bowed to the ground. I passed through it about three miles, exploring the track which our "wop" had said would take us to Belgrade. It very obviously ended at a deserted hut

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on the bank of the Danube in a black grove of trees which the most fastidious brigand in the world would have considered a delectable spot fashioned by nature to stage a bloody murder.

I struggled back to camp and found the other two almost in despair about starting the engine. Not only had the water frozen in the radiator leak, but the pump was solid; the oil was solid. The only flowing liquid we owned was benzine.

We took the radiator off. Very tenderly, we thawed both water container and pump and made another temporary repair of the radiator bottom. When that was accomplished, what with the unaccustomed and breath-taking cold, the rare atmosphere and the long night's struggle, we were almost exhausted, so I called a halt at noon and ordered complete rest for everybody until three o'clock, meanwhile serving out bully beef and rum. Rest, however, proved almost impossible, for every little while peasants strolled to the car full of questions which nobody understood. Occasionally when they were comprehensible their subsequent debates were interesting. Two of them nearly had a fight as to whether London was or was not the capital of America, and when another, under cover of a screen of curious friends, had piled our copper hammer, a bottle of rum, my fur gloves and two wrenches in a neat heap in his waggon, I caused great astonishment in the land by protesting.

By the time the radiator was mended as well as seemed feasible it was half-past three and we were all tired out again. Just then a person with the countenance of a Sicilian bandit fell on us out of the blue with an armful of firewood with which he proceeded to feed our sodden fire. It was good, dry wood and Francis, at any rate, was delighted. His views all day had varied every few minutes from thinking the blackest villainy of the whole population to a profound belief in their good intentions. Francis was not accustomed to the cunning

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of the European peasant and the good deed of this visitor almost brought tears to his eyes.

"Bushmen everywhere are the same," he said. "This poor bloke looks a dinkum bushman and he has brought us a bit of his dry wood."

He proceeded to hold forth on the virtues of the bushman. I was, at the moment, retiring from the fight with the radiator to have a malarial fit, but I curbed the malaria because I had a suspicion that any feeling of hospitality in the breast of our benefactor was towards himself, an idea which was strengthened when our friend of the morning from Pittsburg arrived somewhat the worse for slivovitza, which is the local whisky. He was both cheeky and obstreperous. He addressed me as "Young Feller." Then he demanded coffee and asked us to drink with him. He remarked that it was all settled that he and three companions whom he had brought with him, and who were as drunk as victorious pirates, should guide us to Belgrade on the morrow; and, as he and the Samaritan of the firewood winked at each other continuously, I ordered them all out of the camp and they left shouting that they would come back and see us to-night. Whereupon, we passed a unanimous resolution that, if we had to blow the car up, she would not be there when they returned.

5

At 4.40 a subdued splutter advertised that the engine was at last ready to start. Before we left England, the motoring papers had been full of the simple remedies of sanguine drivers who had infallible methods of starting up cars which were frozen. For the benefit of those who have never been educated by an excursion to the Danube in zero weather, I append ours, which was as follows:

Thaw radiator with boiling water and keep thawed with heated blanket wrapped in tarpaulin.

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IN JUGO-SLAVIA

IN JUGO-SLAVIA

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Put hot coals round pump.

Bake spark plugs and surround with hot coals after freeing the engine as much as possible with kerosene priming.

Sprinkle plenty of hot ash on engine head.

Fill carburettor with warm benzine and choke with benzine bandage.

Fill radiator with water near boiling point.

Swing cranking-handle and self-starter in shifts for about an hour and a half and—if nothing blows up or catches fire in the meantime—you may be rewarded in the end by the cheerful sound of the engine ticking over.

When this happened we forgot our tiredness and as, with the aid of a compass and the imminent sunset, I had determined which road was most likely to lead to Belgrade and with a map measurer that the distance was about thirty miles, I decided to make for there or Zemun (Semlin), the sister city on our side of the Save, at once. At sundown the temperature was 1° above zero. Our radiator was leaking so badly that it virtually refused to hold water at all, but we covered the distance in 4½ hours with seventeen fills of water in thirty-one miles. Filling up was an unpleasant task because the ice had to be broken or thawed. Then one's gloves became wet and froze hard on the outside. But, if you lost patience and took them off, the result was frozen fingers and your skin burnt with the cold of the metal.

We came into Zemun tired to the bone. Knowles had gone lame with chilblains. Birtles, unaccustomed to cold, and fresh from the tropics, seemed utterly worn out, and I myself was not sorry to repack my bandages and be rid of the pile of heavy coats and other insulation which, while necessary to ward out the cold, proved an exhausting burden when there was any labour to be performed.

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CHAPTER V

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY IN THE BALKANS

I

THE Balkans are supposed to be made up of amusing states whose principal uses in the great world are to provide plots for musical comedies and interim employment for war correspondents who, for the moment, lack major tasks.

Both these things are partly true and might be wholly true if it were not for the tragedy of everyday Balkan life. There is more human trouble in Zemun or Belgrade or Sofia or any little village between than one sees in a twelvemonth of an Australian city, but the tragedy seems so mixed with unconscious comedy that, to the stranger, it itself becomes almost comic.

Down the river from Zemun runs, or rather crawls, a steam ferry which would be promptly excommunicated if it attempted to ply in Sydney Harbour or Port Philip. The Save is a broad, muddy stream, swift flowing to meet the Danube, which it joins nearby, between desolate banks, low to the north and gradually climbing on the south from the littered flood-mark to the eminence which is crowned by the capital.

This height is guarded, as you see it first, by a frowning bastion pitmarked with Austrian shells. Meanwhile, the band on the ferry plays squeakily; the icepacks lift and wag their heads as if they were animate as the ship passes them; a section of soft bank falls into the river with a plop. All around you are gentlemen with

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black hats and officers in brilliant uniforms and girls whose ankles are hidden in muffs and overshoes and a shining galaxy of other Jugo-Slavians.

Here, for instance, in the first-class cabin, is somebody in naval rig. He has a gold-braided cap, a blue coat reaching his calves, a large sword, very much polished boots and wherever there is room for it, he has a variegation of gold lace. Your eye wanders to his arm which shows that, by British standards, he must be a Rear-Admiral. Your memory wanders to Brassey, which indicates that Jugo-Slavia owns two old Austrian ironclads, twelve small torpedo boats (once Austrian) and a fearsome monitor of as much as 440 tons displacement. When you realize that these are only used for police purposes under the Peace Treaty which allowed them to be acquired, you admit that it needs a little gold braid to make up for the country's other maritime deficiencies. Also you feel that it is rather mean of the ferry captain to take advantage of the fact that he is in possession of a real ship, to lord it over the nine co-equals of the Rear-Admiral who, plus two Admirals of the Blue, one First Lord and six other people who cannot boast more than four sleeve bands apiece, form the Naval Passenger Complement of the ferry.

Very evidently, the ferry captain has not thought of this. He is quite as well tailored as the armed marine, and something—probably the enormity of the fare which he collects and which is nearly twopence—so exalts him that he is unable to give an order except through a magnificent flag-lieutenant.

That one of the Admirals in the cabin is driven to drink during the voyage, which takes about twenty minutes, is probably due to his rival's haughtiness. At any rate, he orders a slivovitza, price one penny, and, *coram populo*, absorbs it with a loud noise, not before he has taken from his pocket a big handkerchief which he tucks into the neck of his tunic. You remember

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with shame that at the Imperial Conference Naval manœuvres off Portland Bill, you saw an Admiral of the British Navy in command of the "Hood", "Repulse", "Renown", "Revenge" and some other coracles drop cigar ash down his coat while he told four Dominion Prime Ministers and a Maharajah a funny story. You shudder and are hoping that Britain will never have to fight Jugo-Slavia at sea, when there is a loud bump. Your teeth rattle; the glasses on the table rattle. The impact is so great that even the admirals seem to rattle. You wonder if you have been torpedoed, but you have merely arrived at Belgrade wharf. So soon as you are well on your feet, the master mariner in charge does it again, which is both bad for the wharf and your nerves.

2

You are poured out in a narrow stream of fellow-travellers with your eyes on the ground lest you trip over a stray sword. Then you climb a million steps and you are in Belgrade, which consists of a couple of main streets fairly well paved, with a rabbit warren of other streets, very badly paved and running down to the Danube with a precipitancy that must be horribly inconvenient for the intoxicated. The hotels for so small a place are brilliant. The variety of drinks is cosmopolitan. So is the life. You may eat, in Belgrade, the food of any country in Europe, properly cooked. While you are doing it, an Oriental rug seller in a fez and armed with the treasures of Kidderminster or some other Asian stronghold equally convincing, importunes you. He is almost as Oriental as the ones you see in French watering places.

Immediately he focusses your mind nationally and you realize that on this side of the Danube you have come into the French zone. Only a few years ago the inhabitants of the other bank, where Zemun lies, were hurling shells across at this portion of the earth and howling

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with glee every time a Serbian turned up his toes. Now the north side of the river is conquered territory. Popularly, among the great races of the earth, it is supposed to go down on its bended knees and pray for President Wilson (especially), Mr. Lloyd George (a little) and M. Clemenceau (on Sundays). Actually, like all the conquered territories which we encountered on our travels, it was sullen, and insisted on speaking German, just like the rejoicing Alsatians and Lorrainers. In Zemun, everybody spoke German, and in the villages further north, every tap-room seemed to be singing fierce songs of hate in something the tone in which the "Marseillaise" was sung during the French Revolution. Literally, that singing brought the goose-flesh out on one's skin. It was full of a horrible naked passion of anger such as we have never heard in a people in Australia and one hopes we are never likely to hear. But one had to admit that these people, vanquished, were paying for their part in the war. Serbia's absorption of them into a "comity of sister nations" had produced a family in which the north is playing the part of a very rebellious Cinderella.

Old Serbia is flourishing, with new towns, new factories, new uniforms everywhere. New Serbia is oppressed, poor, stripped, it appears, to help pay for the south's blossoming.

Ergo, when you cross the Danube or the Save you pass out of the region where German is the fashionable language and enter that in which everything is modelled on France. Those who believe that Britain has done more for Serbia than any other nation receive a rude shock at finding that whatever official circles may profess to feel towards us, the British language, British merchandise, British thought are not in favour with the general populace. Even the Serbian bank notes are modelled on French money. One hundred dinars looks so much like a hundred francs that it takes a sharp eye

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to tell the difference at first glance. But, as a military man said to me in Belgrade, how could you expect the Serbians to model themselves on the British? Their uniforms are so dull, their five-pound notes are plain black on white paper; they are so nationally unpatriotic that they never shoot a striker, and their language! High heaven, what a tongue!

3

The only thing British in Belgrade, indeed, is the rite of changing the palace Guard. That is modelled on the daily Buckingham Palace ceremony with variations. At 11 a.m. the eight gates of the palace are guarded by sixteen soldiers in dirty sheepskins, with dirty boots—for the effulgence of the officer class does not extend to the rank and file.

Enters a gorgeous blue platoon with a band as big as itself. The band plays airs in the palace garden. Officers walk up and down with a Grenadier Guard step and drawn swords. Then, the Blue Guard marches round all eight gates in a blasé fashion and relieves the sheepskin guard. The band plays some more and everybody goes home except the original sheepskins who may be found back at their old posts at 11.30 a.m., as if nothing had happened in the interval.

On the first morning on which I observed this ceremony, I got myself into serious trouble. While I was gazing with admiration at the Royal (Sheepskin) sentry trying not to chase a fly round his face, while his relief guard was imminent, a policeman approached me and said:

"Xwzpb! K7⅞%zxwq!" or words to that effect.

But, as he had only four stripes on his sleeve and was armed with no more than a ·45 automatic and a long dirk, I took very little notice of him.

The true Balkan principle of life is to keep your eye on the man with the longest bayonet and, as the sentry

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had that, I followed my instinct and merely moved back from the pavement's edge, which was what I thought the policeman intended me to do.

It very evidently wasn't, for, shouting "Psbozrxsl!" with some gusto, he took me by the right arm (after having discreetly unhasped the catch of his revolver pouch) and tried to lead me away.

We then, as they say in the courts, had a conversation. I asked him in four languages what he meant and he told me in one to come along quietly. Then a cosmopolite in the crowd intervened and cheered me by remarking:

"Sir, you yet already have committed a very great crime."

"Will you please-very-much tell the constable that I am the Britishofficialaustralianmotorexpeditionmisterovercommandant and that I desire forthwith his non-commissioned officer to see?" I begged, with hauteur.

The interpreter did. The constable released me and waved his arms at him. The rest of the crowd also waved its arms. Three motor-cars which, after the habit of automobiles in that cold, high city, were steaming mightily from their radiators, stopped at the edge of the footpath to watch the pantomime.

"What's the matter?" I asked the crowd at large.

"The policeman says," replied my German friend, "that you are assassin."

"If so," he added cheerfully, "it is *kaput* (all up) with you."

The officer arrived at this juncture, a splendid being who proved, after all, to be only a sergeant.

"What's all this nonsense?" I demanded.

"Take your hands out of your pockets when you speak to me," said he.

"Take them out yourself!" said I, trembling inwardly, for in one pocket of my leather coat I had a revolver given me by a misguided friend and in the other I had

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the largest clasp-knife that I could acquire from Rogers of Sheffield. I cursed the giver of the revolver especially because I am always against carrying arms, and I had been merely waiting for a deserving person to present it to.

We wrangled. Eventually, I was marched down the street until we met a commissioned officer. Then the facts came out. It appears that I was standing opposite the open gates of the palace (though on the other side of the road) and my strange garb of leather coat and flying helmet attracted attention to me. As it was not outside the realm of practical politics that I had a Mills bomb or a jam-tin full of gelignite in each pocket, the policeman told me to move on, and when I did not do so, he became convinced that I was held to the spot by a zeal for Royal Bloodshed, since the King was due to emerge in a few minutes.

It all ended in an exchange of drinks in a café. There is now a Serbian officer who rejoices in a ·45 automatic, the gift of a British admirer. I no longer have a revolver. I was the admirer. I no longer have the deadly knife from Rogers either. A Persian near Duzdab has that. I did not give it to him; he took it when I was not looking.

4

Comic opera in Belgrade and the Balkans, however, is mainly the province of the morning. Then arrives romance when all the pretty girls come out of their offices and parade for two hours at midday, a gay and somewhat eerie scene since all the paraders wear overshoes which muffle their footfalls. And the sleighs jog down the streets and the uniforms congregate in blinding groups in little cafés and indulge in satisfying meals such as spaghetti Napoli or three penn'orth of lettuce and olive oil or two biscuits and a quart of red wine. Motor-cars steam, hawkers cry their wares. Taxi-cabs,

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each driven by a prehistoric person in a goatskin or sheepskin coat, tear round with a complete disregard for human life, and in and out of this exciting traffic ride Colonels on horses and Croat families from across the river, father in spliced gaiters, black lambskin cap and beflowered hide-coat, mother and the girls sitting on the straw behind him and rising involuntarily at every cobble with the easy grace of the experienced. Each member of the family hangs on like grim death to an outraged, woolly-backed pig on the way to execution. Beside these tumbrils walk the stately hounds of the district, half-dog, half-wolf, green-eyed and savagely evil.

At two o'clock all this pageant fades, astonishingly. The streets seem deserted under the leaden, winter sky. A bell begins to toll. Or stay—toll is not the right word for it. The bells of the Balkans have a note of their own, a cadence different from all the other bells in the world. Just as the temple gongs of the Far East enshrine its lost mystery and the bells of York have kept imprisoned in their music the spirit of the Middle Ages, so the chimes of Belgrade have been enchanted by the wolf of the fierce mountains and steppes around them. They seem to howl with a long-drawn, wolf-like note. It is most uncanny with the grey sky pressing down and the muddy Danube rolling by, rocks of ice lazily turning over in its waters and the snow beginning to powder the pavements.

One church begins that uncanny mourning and then another. You see, coming up the main street, a procession with a long-bearded Greek priest leading, a swaying coffin on high, a rickety droshki or two with sleepy horses steaming at the mouth behind, and, following, again, weeping women and bowed men. You turn into a side street with a shudder to avoid it, and lo, there is another.

On one afternoon in Belgrade while I was there, no less than seven funerals paced the streets at once; on

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another, nine. I escaped on the second afternoon into a barber's shop and found a black flag hanging above the doorway to indicate that a member of the family had paid toll to influenza.

Then I crossed to Zemun, strangely depressed and asked Birtles, who prefers to make all his observations of foreign cities either in a hotel bedroom or in the local garage, to come with me and dine in the capital. He came and trailed behind the party glooming that he was lame and that walking was not a man's work; that the food was greasy; that the waiter was dirty; that Belgrade was the last place on earth. We decided at nine o'clock to catch the last boat at 9.20 and found that it had gone, but that there was an "owl boat" after midnight.

We stood freezing on the wharf and drank in a sailors' den by turns. We were approached by a blustering confidence man and by a party of drunken youths who mistook us for Arabs. At 2 a.m. we reached our hotel.

"The gentlemen's hot baths are ready," said the porter. "They have been ready two hours."

"I did not order baths for the night," said I. "I ordered them for eight to-morrow morning. See that they are prepared then."

Being very much out of sorts, after a wretched evening, I turned on my heel. Next morning at eight there were no baths. The door of the only bathroom was locked and several people, male and female, seemed to be sharing it.

At noon I met a coffin coming up the stairs.

The porter was behind it.

"Gestorben ist Einer," he grinned, "Some one is dead."

"Where?"

"Your neighbour, sir. It is to be regretted that he needed your bath this morning. Your other neighbour

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died two days before you came. Your little friend (Knowles) is sleeping in his room."

5

That was the atmosphere of all Jugo-Slavia in March, 1927, but in Zemun, beneath the cloak of gloom and death, ran a thread of gaiety even more grizzly. For Zemun was full of Russian refugees. Here were faded Russian girls, just old enough to remember the life of ease which was snatched away from them in 1917, plunged in shame to provide for broken-hearted elders, only too often physically maimed by Bolshevik torture and brutality. Here was at least one famous chef keeping a restaurant in a tiny black hole off a side street and serving dishes which would make the mouth of West End London water; and most pathetic of all, the musicians—the bands, the balaika players, the dancers, mainly of a metropolitan standard of artistry, drawn of face and threadbare, making a holiday for the frequenters of greasy little beerhalls. I asked one of these small orchestras to my table at midnight at Zemun and laid out a repast for five of them which cost me exactly nine shillings. They ate with choking, wolfish gulps, saying nothing and leaving no scrap of meat on their chicken bones. At the end of the meal, a pale girl, who said she had been playing all the evening since seven o'clock for a wage of less than one shilling, furtively gathered the crumbs which had fallen on to the table into a well-worn handkerchief and tied them up to take away.

She looked at me with a fierce air of challenge when I caught her doing it as much as to say: "Don't you say anything about this to me or my pride will make me scream and you will have a scene."

Looking at her, I decided that she might be thirty years old. She spoke English perfectly and described a first night at Covent Garden which she had attended

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when she was at school near Eastbourne. Her face said that she had lived through at least a million years of horror and that she had had experiences which would make her hate man, the animal, through all eternity.

Outside, a mumbling figure in the dark offered to sell me rugs—rugs worth five hundred pounds which it had smuggled from the refugee quarter in Constantinople, which had belonged to a Royal Prince, which I could have for next to nothing if I would only call and buy. I rid myself of the apparition only at the hotel, and even when I had reached my room it was still fighting with other shadows who had been attracted by the ring of my pennies on the pavement. (It is wise to throw your largesse to Eastern beggars in the dark. You never know what their hands are like or, if they are Russians, whether they have any hands at all.)

We were not sorry to see the end of Jugo-Slavia. Death and cold and snow pursued us to its very gates, through Jagodina and Nish even to the hotel at Bela Palanka where, high above among the black woods of the Bela Pass, we slept our last night in the country. There we shared a dirty room among ourselves and, with a dozen hangers-on, a little bread and paprika and local brandy and a very small stove. There was a merry little sawyer in the Hotel Nazionale who spoke German and had fought near the British on the Macedonian front and he made himself our cicerone, singing the most ferocious songs and yearning aloud for another war. His hand had been badly cut with a saw and he had no work and (like everybody else in the village) scarcely any food, but his pride insisted that he should pay his share of the drinks which were nearly a penny each and give us entertainment in the way of music.

"Courage, mon camarade, le diable est mort," or the equivalent, was his motto. He saw us to bed with a wretched wisp of candle and in the morning had our

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bill reduced from about five shillings to the following charges:

	Dinars.
Accommodation for three gentlemen	18
Dinner for ditto	10
Breakfast	10
17 drinks	17
Garage and hot water for radiator	0
	55 dinars

Or a little more than four shillings for bed, dinner, breakfast, garage accommodation and seventeen drinks for three guests.

I wondered to myself whether the hotel-keeper could really make a living on that scale. But it is possible that he could. He was a frugal fellow. For instance, there was evidence in the house that he had suffered more than one loss in his family. Yet he had not been so improvident as to throw away the black flags which had been the outward sign of his mourning. Neither was he allowing them to lie idle in mothballs. Instead, they were acting as window curtains in his public room —a place in which the billiard table had three legs and was a relic of a war-time officers' mess.

At 3 a.m. I woke to see the snow gently falling and from the dark forest beyond the village came the mournful howling of the wolves.

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CHAPTER VI

THROUGH THE DRAGOMAN PASS, SOFIA, AND ITS PRACTICAL POLITICS

I

AT last the Dragoman Pass was at hand. It had been a looming terror to me ever since I began to organize. Everybody in London knew all about the Dragoman. They said it was impossible of passage in winter. The Germans had found it so. The Jugo-Slavians had proved it. It was full of rocks, deep water, grades of one in two, precipices, brigands, Bulgarians and other major obstacles even in summer, and the three cars which we could trace as having passed through in favourable seasons had severally been hauled out of trouble with numerous bullocks.

It was pointed out to us that in winter the difficulties would be multiplied tenfold and the brigands would be extra hungry for spoils. And the nearer we got to the Bulgarian border the more deterrent was the advice. At Serbian towns the good citizens sniffed and wondered why we were not armed to the teeth. They intimated that anybody who went to Bulgaria without a couple of machine-guns was a trifle loose in the head. By innuendo, they let it be known that all Bulgarians drank blood with their porridge. And as, not long afterwards, a Bulgarian sentry was murdered by a Jugo-Slavian soldier at the border post at which we crossed, there is every reason to believe that feeling along the dividing line was not exactly friendly.

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The only practical information which was vouchsafed us by observation as we came nearer to Bulgaria was that the further you went, the more snow there seemed to be and the more death.

By the time we got to Pirot, the snow was a foot deep on the road and the undertakers seemed to be doing a roaring business. They were a light-hearted crowd, not given to glooming over death. In the main street they had their coffins laid out on trestles and painted in attractive colours, suitable for all ages and wages. Advertisements were propped against them illustrated with pretty pictures of citizens in graceful attitudes of dissolution and the reductions clearly marked and strengthened with appropriate slogans which I could not read but which had a reassuring look.

"This size reduced to 200 dinars. Good old benzine case with copper nails. Put one aside for your little daughter on the lay-by system," one could imagine them reading and I prayed we should not need any of them.

2

We pushed on to Tsaribrod and therein found the Middle Ages. It was market morning and the street was crowded with all the life of, say, a Welsh border village of the fifteenth century. The men wore that brown homespun which you see in museums and which has been out of fashion in Western Europe for three centuries and their tailors might well have acted for the men-at-arms of the Emperor Charles V. They eddied, shouting and joking, with their pack ponies loaded with faggots and pack bullocks loaded with grain and chickens and babies among a motley of rude wains and troubadours and loud-voiced but musical hucksters. The only thing modern was the policeman and his revolver who led us to the Railway Station, where I paid for many stamps as usual.

At 1.30, after further warnings about the Pass, we

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were on the road again and soon came to the Bulgarian post, almost precipitating a Balkan war. It appeared that we had missed a Jugo-Slavian post which we should have visited for more stamps and inadvertently come upon Bulgarian soil.

This greatly disturbed the Jugo-Slavian nation which had seen us transgress from a distance; so, in the person of an officer, it ventured on to Bulgarian soil and demanded our carcases. The Bulgarians said that we must not go back; that we had crossed the frontier. The Jugo-Slavian waved his arms in indignation. Finally, a compromise was arrived at and the motor-car was officially declared to be a portion of Jugo-Slavia for the purposes of stamp sales and endorsements.

I was sorry when this ceremony came to an end, for now we were finished with triptiques and carnets and standing arrangements between civilized nations for the untrammelled passage of each other's motor-travelling citizens, and dependent on what concessions the British Embassies had been able to secure for us. What they had been able to arrange in Bulgaria we did not know since our intercourse was limited to a dozen words; but as a guard, a fat fellow in green, came on board, it seemed that at least we were going on, though the officer made me a long speech about the Dragoman of which I understood next to nothing.

Knowles was most anxious to drive the Dragoman, but I decided that my best plan was to tell Birtles nothing of its terrors and put him at the wheel. Francis was apt to turn a minor ceremony into a major one if he had been warned ahead of its imminence; but if he did not know that he was doing anything out of the common he was just as apt to take his difficulties in his stride as not.

There were plenty of difficulties, mostly hidden under snow.

We slid down a long hill, dropped over a crumbling

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bank and found ourselves suddenly on the ice of a hill stream which luckily was strong enough to hold us. Then we turned up hill in a series of narrow hairpin bends on a track which looked and felt as if it were made of slippery candle-grease.

The tail of the car, in spite of chains on the wheels, tried persistently to wag off this tenuous highway and send us hurtling down the track, but we came safely into the defile, a swaying, bumping, medley of men, and gear-breaking bonds, and tossing springs and clanking chains. The guard suddenly left us with an antelope-like spring. Immediately the support beneath our wheels cracked and I drew a breath of relief when I found that we had been on ice over a stream which had been covered by snow newly slid off the mountain side. Before the guide had recovered his place we stopped with a horrid, sickening crash. The engine gasped and stalled; our teeth rattled; the car frame quivered.

"Good-bye to our crank-case," I breathed hurriedly, shovelling snow with both hands under the running board. It was very soft snow, but it had a hard jagged rock in the middle of it which neatly pared off the skin on the tops of two fingers. I had barely begun to curse in keeping with my injury when the Bulgarian guard met the same obstacle and he began to keep me company in Bulgarian. I often wondered afterwards whether we said the same things.

The running board was sitting on the rock which had hit our front axle, and, being rooted from the earth in which it had been half buried, had, luckily for us, turned over sideways instead of ripping our all too tender sump which was made of only thin material. One of our front wheels was off the ground and the running board had acquired an upward bend in its centre.

We jacked up the car and with much labour rolled the rock away. At once we found ourselves skating on another stream which seemed to be the road. We did

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a gentle minuet down this for nearly a mile; then bounced over more rocks.

Now we began to climb, first on roads, cut along the side of precipices where a four foot skid meant death; then up broad hill-sides on which there were no tracks visible and where once, when I chanced to step off the main road, the Bulgarian caught me just in time to prevent me from disappearing into twelve feet of snow. Twice little avalanches of rocks and ice came booming down across the road ahead of us on the precipice section, so that we were not sorry to see the broader hill-sides, even though the road was hidden and only the soldier's uncanny knowledge of its bends and twists enabled us to traverse it.

The grades were not heavy, but the surface was so slippery that even our chains could not find a purchase and were often torn off with links snapped. When we stopped, as we did every hundred yards, there was great difficulty in starting again even with the weight of the party pushing behind and following up at a run to put their shoulders to the back of the car if she showed any disposition to stop. It was an exciting time. In our heavy coats we perspired like working bullocks, and the frequent antics of the runners who were apt to turn double somersaults on unsuspected slides kept us merry, all except Francis, whose volley of swear words condemnatory of the Bulgarian winter, the car, ourselves, snow and his own foolishness in leaving Australia, made the mountains ring.

We seemed to have been no time on the way before we were out of the main defile and not much more before a village leapt into sight over a hill-top.

"Dragoman," said the guide.

"We're through," I cried. I looked at my watch. The passage had occupied about three hours and we were face to face with the Bulgarians from whom after our previous Balkan experience we expected neither

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mercy nor justice, though we knew that there had been a tentative promise given in Sofia that we should be granted facilities. Still, as they had explained in Belgrade, that might well have been "one of those Oriental promises," seeing that the Government would never expect us to reach Bulgaria in the snow.

3

We drew up outside the Customs House, a two-story building with no pretensions to beauty, on a bleak, wet road from which the snow had been shovelled. The guard went into the building and for what seemed an interminable time, no human being appeared except a few curious children who chewed the fingers of their gloves and viewed us discreetly from afar.

Then a comically good-natured head put itself out of an upper-story window and shouted in German:

"Who are you?"

"My name is Ellis——"

"Welcome to our city," shouted the voice. "The proverb says: 'Even from the snow you sometimes acquire a friend.' Bulgaria is glad to see you. Come on board."

I climbed the stairs into a bare room which, like every other official room we were in in Bulgaria, reflected the poverty of the Government and a dozen young Bulgarians shook hands excitedly. That was the last of our apprehensions about Bulgaria. It did us royally from that moment onwards. Nothing was too much trouble for its officials, and the more we were a nuisance, the better they seemed to like it.

My new-found friend insisted on taking us to the railway refreshment room and buying us Bulgarian beer, which was very good, though the first three bottles served to us had to be sent back because their contents were frozen into solid globules of ice.

We made Sofia in the dark and most unprepossessing

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it looked; for it had been snowing there for days and the thaw was imminent. Down the centres of the streets the snow was piled in heaps four feet high, dirty chocolate-coloured compost mixed with the offal of the gutters. But the Imperial hotel proved well above the standard of the streets. Its apartments were regal; its menials were without number and it possessed a lift—the only lift in Bulgaria; the only lift, indeed, in the whole wide world of which the installation had been chronicled as a national event in the august pages of the "Times."

Woebetide the unfortunate guest of the Hotel Imperial who forgets the existence of that lift. He may go without a hot bath for weeks. He may throw potatoes at the lady dancers who infest the basement cabaret which is the hotel's only restaurant. He may get drunk or sing "Tipperary" on the stairs and I doubt if anybody will say a word of protest to him; but if he shows the slightest sign of walking up the stairs, three large persons in gorgeous livery will leap upon him with shocked countenances.

"Sir, the lift!" they murmur in very much the same tones in which they might speak if they were to say: "Sir, you are inadvertently walking about without your trousers on."

They look stern and you capitulate—that is if there are not more than three of you, for that is all that the Imperial lift will hold.

4

Sofia in the morning proved to be well snowed under with small oases of its bright saffron-coloured pavement peeping through the horrid mess. Its trees were bare and all its girls added to a natural width of figure a prudent skin of garments which made some of them appear equal in dimensions from whichever angle they were viewed. The city itself was very evidently paying for the war. In spite of gorgeous officers on the streets

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AT OUR CHEAPEST HOTEL ON THE BULGARIAN BORDER

IN SOFIA

Left to right: Knowles, Ellis, Birtles

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and the brightness of hue of some of the buildings, penury was the only word to describe the state of most of the population.

Still, it was an interesting city. Its palace and its bands; its polyglot population; its banks where armed soldiers kept guard; its coinage which enabled one to be a millionaire not too expensively and where a day's hotel bill ran into four figures; and its methods in politics which were novel, all tended to make it different from Western Europe.

Its politics are peculiarly attractive. The chief monument to their attractiveness in Sofia just now is the old Cathedral, which consists of a few shattered walls and some heaps of rubble half buried in snow. It appears that a couple of years after the war the Communists were seeking to obtain power in Sofia, assisted by a few Russian advisers. Electoral methods did not, of course, appeal to them, so they decided, in true Russian fashion, to murder everybody in Bulgarian politics who mattered and give themselves a clear run.

Furthermore, with true Muscovite genius, they resolved to do this admirable deed in a single act and the only problem which faced them was that of gathering the victims into one spot. This was not easy. If they bombed Parliament there was still the King and the leading capitalists and worse still the army chiefs.

Then rose a bright fellow at the Council Chamber Table and spake somewhat thus:

"Brothers! What we need is a jolly good funeral. People may stay away from a garden party or Parliament or a review, but if we choose the right funeral, everybody worth while from Ferdinand downwards will be compelled to show his respect. They will all go to the memorial service. We get there first and plant a little gelignite. The Bishop gives out the first hymn. We touch the button and—up she goes. Let's organize a memorial service!"

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And, even so, it happened.

A prominent Bulgarian Minister went for a walk in the dusk and was found next morning on the pavement with his toes turned up and his abdomen full of lead. He had a fine memorial mass in the Cathedral which came to an abrupt end in its own exaltation. They swear in Bulgaria that bits of cathedral and portions of mangled mourner fell out of the sky for hundreds of yards around and a pot-pourri of 120 victims of the new credo of the Brotherhood of Man was collected with shovels and buried in a common grave.

Also, thanks to the undeniable efficiency of the Bulgarian police, a number of disgruntled Communists went for a short walk outside the city where they were tied to overhead beams with very short ropes and left to meditate in mid-air on the aftermaths of dynamiting.

5

Wherefore, to-day, everybody in Sofia has a not unnatural horror of Communists.

One afternoon I was walking in public park with a resident, when I noticed curious marks on some of the tree-trunks.

"Oh, those!" said my cicerone carelessly. "Just bullet marks. Within the past three years it was quite a common experience when you walked here to stroll into the middle of a Communist hunt. Why, I have seen the whole of this park lying on its stomach for dear life while the police chased the vermin with their rifles."

"Does this often happen?"

"Not now. The game is getting very scarce these days. There is no fun any more. By the way, have you any Communists in Australia?"

"Lots of them."

"Which do you do—shoot or hang them?"

"Neither. We put them into Parliament. They are friends with State Premiers when Labour is in power.

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They go to Moscow and come back and tell us what a fine place it is and all the newspapers publish what they have to say and they become national characters."

"But you do not like them?"

"Some of us don't, but others of us live in a fools' Paradise and are ready to tolerate them."

"You yourself have no sympathy with Communists?" asked my guide anxiously, his eye, full of purpose, straying to a large soldier who, armed with a rifle, fifty rounds, a revolver and a sword, was tramping the park with the air of a man looking for dirty work to do.

"I am entirely opposed to Communism," I replied hastily.

"Quite right, quite right," murmured the guide with, I thought, a shade of disappointment in his voice as he took his eye off the soldier. "Let us go to the Imperial Restaurant and see the snake-girl dance. It is warmer there."

"Tut! Tut! Tut!" he said several times, as we went. "To think that there are countries where they do not hang Communists! Tut! Tut! Tut!"

Everybody talked of Communists. Even the gentle, courtly Spanish Ambassador who was President of the Automobile Club and who did everything mortal man could to make our journey safe and easy, turned from the water-colour which he was painting when I called on him, and had a mild word to say about them. And the British Legation, where we lunched and which became father and mother to us, had not forgotten them.

Most of the cavalry which we saw on the road to Philippopolis and down the pretty Maritza Valley, fairy green and grey, on our way to the Bulgarian-Turkish border, were said to be in training only because of Communist plotting and the possibility of internal dissension. Also, no doubt, the rifle-armed police of Tatar Bazardjik, where we slept one night in a foul-smelling inn after supper of brown breadcrust and sour

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wine brought by a sleepy and barefooted boy, looked so soldierlike in their equipment for the same reason.

6

We did not get out of Bulgaria without trouble, for all the kindness of its people. Within a quarter of a mile of the Turkish border we became involved in a snow-drift in a cutting. It was our last during the whole journey and it seemed determined to swallow us. It was "Old Man" snow frozen hard which melted gradually under the weight of the car allowing it to sink to the floor-boards. There seemed a chance that it would sink even further and the only means of rescue available lay in high-speed digging with our shovel, the building of a cairn of rocks under each wheel and then gradual progression, yard by yard.

We traversed, by this method, 130 yards in two hours and forty minutes. On the next hill the Turkish flag fluttered in the breeze.

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CHAPTER VII

WE VISIT TURKEY

I

TURKEY lay a long, dank, undulating countryside without a tree upon its surface as far as the eye could reach. There was a moderately good road into Turkey which looked exactly like the road which ran through Bulgaria. And, just over the border, all the evidence that a Turkish Government existed stable enough to erect and support a Customs House about the size of an average Australian fowl pen. Around it lounged enough customs officers, garbed in green uniforms much the worse for wear, round caps and untidy boots, to hold up the whole mechanized transport of the British Army. They rose in a cloud with their bayonets as we approached, smiling a butcher's sort of smile which seemed to say:

"Ha! Here is some more meat!"

A toothless old non-commissioned officer greeted us with a low bow and then his retinue bowed, some of them becoming tangled in their rifles. He led me to a nearby hut which he said was occupied by the "Captain" of the frontier police.

The "Captain" was a very pleasant fellow. He spoke ten words of French, seven of English and quite a quantity of Turkish as well as a little German. He was housed in a wretched hovel which included his office, in the midst of a homely *ménage* of dogs, hens and children which went scurrying down the passage as we

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came in, what time we heard him hastily donning his sword.

We sat and looked at each other for quite a time before we made any headway, sparring for a common tongue, and in the end we arrived at a sort of armistice after which he spoke Turkish with great freedom and I spoke whatever occurred to me. Then he looked at all my papers upside-down, piled them in a neat heap and then looked at them sideways, rightways and upside-down again.

Eventually he straightened himself suddenly, seized a pen and cried:

"Nom?"

We struggled for several minutes transliterating Eric Walter Knowles, Francis Birtles and Malcolm Henry Ellis into Turco-Arabic. We fought with the translation of that accursed self-description "Overlander" with which Francis designated himself on his passport.

Then it became evident that there was something puzzling about Francis.

"Birtells—Francis?" asked the Captain.

"Oui, Francis," I replied.

"Francis?"

"Oui, oui! Mais certainement! Francis."

"Ah!" breathed the Captain with the air of one who has unearthed the Gunpowder Plot. And from that moment he became most self-important. His attitude changed from one of sunny friendliness to one of concern. He summoned a sergeant and the sergeant summoned a fixed bayonet and the fixed bayonet got on to the footboards of the car with all my documents in his pocket.

"Edirne!" (Adrianople), the Captain cried.

The dogs barked and snarled, racing beside us. The familiar steel blue of the bayonet glinted uncomfortably near one's eye and in a few moments the tall minarets and graceful dome of Selim's Mosque, dwarfing the

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huddled streets beyond the poplars, told us that we were near Hadrian's city. And, wending our way among the donkeys and the porters, thrown from gendarme to gendarme, as it were, by our guide, we found ourselves forthwith taken before the Chief of Police who proved to be a large round man with a black moustache, a French too fluent for me and a not ingratiating manner.

He opened the conversation peremptorily.

"Well," he said, "I have heard all about you. I am ready to assist you. But first, will you explain why, a British Expedition, you have a Frenchman with you!"

"I am sorry, but there is no Frenchman with us."

"But they tell me from the border you have a Frenchman," he said.

We entered upon a polite interrogatory in French which, becoming too subtle for my capacity in that language, I asked for a British or German interpreter. I furthermore asked for the British Consul, but I was told that I would see him presently. However, the German interpreter was forthcoming. He was a Levantine, evidently very much in awe of his surroundings who bent himself double every time anybody in the room opened his mouth and he had an engaging lisp.

He had barely begun to lisp when the Police Chief had a sudden inspiration, gave several dramatic orders as the result of which Francis appeared in custody with a look of pained curiosity on his face, along with the mud which he had accumulated during our sojourn in the Bulgarian border snow, and words on his lips such as surely no Turk had ever heard since the days of Gallipoli.

When the Commissary addressed him in voluble French all he could do was gape, since, as he explained afterwards to an admiring audience, all the French or any other foreign language he knew consisted in the words "Donner und Blitzen" and "Kaffee" which he had learnt on the journey.

However, his arrival and lack of knowledge of the

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French language led to an explanation of the whole incident which lay in the fact that "Francis" was the Turkish word for Frenchman and the captain at the border—who it now transpired was really only a corporal —had thought it was a nationality, not a Christian name.

So we had cigarettes and the interpreter had baksheesh, and we were told that we might have lunch when we had been out to the Customs House which was only two or three miles away and completed our permit arrangements.

On the way thither we met the British Consulate's clerk—he and the Consul were the only Britishers in the place—and he accompanied us to the Customs House, where, perched in negligent attitudes around the building, were more armed customs officials.

2

Their chief was a smiling old gentleman who was most congratulatory at our feat in getting through from London and most apologetic that he was compelled to saddle us with another guard to Constantinople, so as to prevent the chance of our spying on the Chataldja Lines. He took the guard out into the back yard and drilled him before he brought him to us and introduced him with the jocular remark:

"He fought against the Australians during the war. Possibly he has killed several of them, but you must not mind that. He will make a good guide. He knows all the way."

George, as I christened him, certainly did not look the sort who could have killed anybody, except in a dream. He was a wide, jovial, good-tempered stamp of a man. He travelled into town with us and stayed with the car while we went to see the Consul and afterwards, when we returned, he was dining at our expense at the hotel.

I had not bargained for having to feed George at the

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hotel. From what I had seen of the customs men at the station, their idea of a meal was a large piece of bread, cut very thick and crusty. George apparently had other ideas. His rifle leant against the table beside him and he was finishing his soup, which he was imbibing gustily. He sounded just like a New Zealand geyser at work, and when he set eyes on us, he immediately gave evidence that he had drunk other things beside broth.

"Me Gallipoli" (soup in parenthesis), he said. "Me cadet" (Oo-oo-oosh). "Yess! Australian" (suck-suck) "take me Hindustan. Yess! He call me —— —— ——"

He said it with such hilarious good humour that all our hearts were won. He became one of the party and, though the next morning he brought a day's rations consisting of a black loaf, we would have willingly fed him all the way to Stamboul.

3

At the same time, he belied his reputation as a good guide. He was good only so long as the road was broad and there was no doubt about where it was bound. It was a well-marked road for 100 miles, but most of the way we could not travel on it for, with that delightful penchant for destruction, which affects nations around the Balkans, the Turks (or the Bulgarians) had made the road itself impassable and had even chipped the figures off the milestones so that they could not be read, beside treating all bridges to a course of disarrangement which made them a peril to the human life which passed over them.

Therefore, while we slipped and slithered and skidded along a wet surface of grass, or ploughed through black soil bog which was so like the black soil bog of the Australian plains that it brought tears of home-sickness to our eyes, the remains of a metalled, military highway piled high with its own ruins flowed beside us, now and then leading us into wretched villages where every hut

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seemed to be leaking and every woman to be spinning scarlet wool outside a bleak doorway.

Each mile or two was some ancient fountain carved exquisitely in marble, and there were Lule Burgas and some other towns famous from the Balkan wars and dwindling, round lovely mosques, into a crumbled huddle of donkey-filled bazaars in which everybody looked hungry and discontented.

The villages thinned as we made southwards. The bog became deeper and more greasy. The cold bit through our leather coats and in a treeless landscape we came to Chorlu at dusk and asked our way.

Straight on, said the villagers, through that street and keep to the road. We tried to do it. There were bridges down and in places the road stopped entirely at a wide gulch which had been blown in it. Then, even the tracks petered out into a kind of labyrinth and here our guide became thoroughly lost if not disheartened.

Nobody could say that he had not both courage and the power of instant decision. Every time he was asked a question he answered promptly. He led us into an oak swamp and up a high bank and on to the edge of a precipice. And we climbed a buffalo and two mountains and ran into a pack of savage dogs which very nearly succeeded in getting on board the car. Then we entered a village and a very difficult river-bed, came out on the other side under a telegraph line and back. The few cold stars wheeled and turned over our heads, but George never faltered.

He vetoed all suggestions of sleep. He waved food aside. He sang like a lark in the gloom and when one direction brought us to a dead end, he got off the car, leant against the petrol tanks, lit a cigarette and picked out another course.

I, meanwhile, tried to steer by compass, but it was no use. The hill tracks were too tortuous. Presently, a faint breeze came up and I fancied I smelt the sea, and

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the very next minute we were on a mule-track looking down into a sharp V-shaped gutter which rose on its nether side into heavy snow. There was a high bank on the left. The dip in the centre was very steep. The "get-out" made a delightful horseshoe bend and the "rough" on the right-hand side of the track was Valonia scrub oak, twenty feet below the roadway.

I climbed out and inspected.

"Shall I try it?" cried Francis.

"Come on," I called. "One good skid and you'll all be in heaven!"

Against the skyline, the car seemed to heave. I had a glimpse, above flying snow, of an impotently waving rifle; of Knowles jarred from his seat; of the radiator face, gleaming nickel, rising towards me. Then I heard the slither of a wheel turning on nothing, while a geyser of mud and snow and reeds flew up into the air behind, followed by a medley of curses in three languages.

Inspection proved that the crossing, under the hard, frozen surface of earth, had no more support than piled boughs and rushes into which a stick could be pushed for yards. It was no use trying to dig out. It was hopeless to build a timber bridge underneath because there was no timber large enough. It was dangerous to remain where we were because nobody knew how weak or strong the underpinning of the crossing might be, and it was obvious that if there were a further thaw in the morning, the softening of the surface might send us hurtling into the pit.

It was midnight. Some very uncertain stars gave a dim light. What to be done? George seemed to think the right thing to do was sing. He sang—may Allah help him! Francis thought swearing might help and he swaggered about doing it. And, as for poor, good-tempered, ever-willing Knowles, he floundered around trying experiments and pausing forlornly after each to mutter a pious hope that all the rabbits of the Turks

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who built that crossing might incontinently perish. When all hope failed him he emulated George and with his comical cap awry sat on a rock and carolled "God bless the Prince of Wales."

4

That seemed to do it. No sooner had he begun than there arose from the valley over the next rise, a series of the most lugubrious noises. The call of roosters vied with the mournful howling of dogs.

"Ha!" we all cried. "A town!"

Forthwith, it was decided that Knowles should lead an expedition consisting of George to the village. We sent him off jocularly, adjuring him to call for help if he needed us and advising him to keep George well in front and to remember that his trousers were expedition property should he meet any dogs. He went—George rather grudgingly in the van.

Silence for several minutes.

The tumult of battle arose. Howls, snarls, the impact of rock on dog, the whining retreat, raised human voices.

More silence. Presently, "God bless the Prince of Wales" came down the track and, in its wake, Knowles and George and the villagers.

The villagers were led by their headman and they were "all got up to kill," in spite of the fact that midnight had long since struck. They wore baggy blue trousers and red sashes and queer little turned-up hats and a variety of stockings and boots. They all talked at once and it was evident from the first that contact with them had changed George for the worse. His gay smile was gone and he had become the Government.

He ordered the headman about like a dog and he brushed aside the village constable as if he had been a mere local rubbishman.

It was only when he tried to make them work that he failed. They certainly attached a wire rope to the dumb

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irons and leant negligently on it. But they did not pull. In vain, Knowles cheered them with loyal songs. Even his *pièce de résistance*, a cheerful ballad about a festival in a harem, did not move them.

"Nothing for it but bullocks," I said at last.

"Huh!" said George.

George and I had a short talk about bullocks. I said bullocks in English, Australian, French, German, Italian and Latin. I did not say it in Turkish because I did not know how. George did not know how in any of the other languages.

Eventually it became a case of sign language.

So we turned on the spot light and, the leader of the Imperial Cars Expedition, having placed himself coyly within its rays, went down on all fours and mooed like a cow in the snow.

"Tch!" breathed the expectant audience. "Manda!"

The headman made an impassioned speech lasting ten minutes. George made an impassioned speech. It was full of things about the British Embassy and Excellencies, the customs and other important matters of which I caught fleeting sentences.

When they had both finished, all the rest of the village made an oration and at the end of it George translated pithily:

"They say twenty lira, I say two lira. You give them five—when we are pulled out."

The bargain was struck. The village left in a body. Presently came the manda. They were little black buffalo and they looked weedy and weak. We tied them to the car.

"Haide! Haide!" shouted the village.

The manda seemed to take a weary breath. The steel cable parted. We put a chain on and that parted. We put two chains and they snapped like thread. All the time the manda seemed to do nothing more than sigh.

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At last, I gave it up and we all trooped to the village, which was a slough from melting snow, a queer outlandish place, every rush-thatched house surrounded by a sort of stockade in which the goats scurried. Outside, the dogs howled and snarled at us and there was a mutter of awakened children and uneasy womenfolk overhead; a glow of charcoal fires on the hearths, of ashes and the scent of new sheepskins and impregnated coffee.

In a trice, within warm walls, we were on sleeping mats sinking into oblivion! My last consciousness was of a hawk-like, bearded face silhouetted against the red light of the charcoal in the hearth; of the bowed and weary figure of the headman, my host, hanging close to the coals.

I was too tired even to realize that this gentle villager, who looked like a brigand and possibly was in his spare moments, was sitting up all night because he had given me his only bedclothes. He woke me almost with the dawn, to offer me black bread and milk, the smiling face of George in the background, and the voice of Knowles behind, crying cheerily: "Now for Constantinople!"

5

Constantinople is a pleasant place. It is what Sydney will be in eighteen hundred years if, in process of striding down through history, it is sacked a few dozen times and the proceeds of the sackings lies in accumulating heaps of marble across a medley of grey walls, cypress, blue water and minarets.

To enjoy it, however, we had to get there, and when we inspected the car it seemed unlikely that we should. In the early light she looked quite derelict, lying at an angle with last night's mud and snow trampled around her and all the village shivering in the dawn and most unintelligibly discussing ways and means.

Presently the ways and means resolved themselves into more and more manda, more and more firmly anchored.

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We tried four and they sighed with rippling shoulders and achieved a sort of creak in the car and nothing more. We tried six, with four strands of wire rope—which the providers had told us in England would hold ten tons—and the four ropes went off with a bang, leaving six buffaloes still sighing and unmoved.

Then we wove more strands and collected more buffaloes and, at last, with a hollow groan of suction, old Scrap Iron rose from her grave and climbed the hill, skidding perilously near the edge of the track.

About a hundred yards further on, she got herself bogged and kept on becoming bogged. She glued herself to the road so tightly that when we pulled her out with engine power she tore her chains to pieces. The village trailed behind and pushed and the hopeful owners of manda were not unmindful of their possible future opportunities.

Eventually, when we escaped up a very high hill on to hard ground, the last glimpse we had of our benefactors was of a hardy procession of manda wending its way through the slough of despond which we had left behind.

We then had only one trouble left. Where were we? George didn't know.

"Where is Constantinople?" I demanded of him in most beautiful Turkish.

"Ah!" said George mysteriously. "Where?"

Holding his bayonet with the air of a man picking a horse from a list with a pin, he suddenly stabbed the horizon and said: "There!"

We went "there." We met a shepherd and after apparently receiving several assurances from George, he admitted that he had heard of Constantinople. After getting a dozen more, he said that it was exactly in the opposite direction to the one which George had selected.

We turned round. Within five miles the dull blue grey of Marmora with still ships upon it appeared and a

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far-off town nestling under a headland and an ash-grey road meandering up and down a lovely coastline between lawns of green grass.

It seemed a magnificent road—till we reached it. Then it proved to have been built by the Romans or the Goths or some other ancient people and not repaired since. It had rocky mounds all over it and a patent motor-trap type of culvert which allowed you to get your front wheels over it, but which then left your undergear sitting solidly on a flat table of stone, so that the only way to get off was to jack up the rear wheels and build an elevation under each of them.

We did this at eighteen bridges before we reached our first major bunker, which was a village.

In the village it was Turkish Sunday—that is Friday—and the Turkish flag was hung out of every doorway. It is a fervent, blood-red flag like an auctioneer's and the reiteration of its brilliance left one, at first glance, with the uneasy feeling that the whole of Turkey was up for sale.

A civil policeman, of course, held us up. He looked at our passports and papers and then he had a five-round, verbal battle with George, at the end of which it was explained that the Chief of Police was away and would be back to-morrow when he would be glad to hold an inquest on us.

George, as we afterwards discovered when we reached Stamboul, explained, in effect, that we were his meat and that we had been consigned to his care to be delivered as quickly as possible at headquarters. There was a very typhoon of an argument, but George won.

The rest of the day was given over to the same sort of thing—jack your way over a culvert; become bogged in the mud; get out of the mud; become bogged in policemen; smoke cigarettes on the footwalk and drink tiny cups of coffee with a gendarme; escape from gendarme, meet another culvert.

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As we had been out of bed since dawn and had little or nothing to eat but unaccustomed brown bread for nearly forty hours, this treatment was not conducive to good humour or to admiration of the delightful coast-line. I enjoyed it less because our deviations of the day before and all the low-gear work had eaten up the greater part of our petrol and oil and we ran so low that to secure supplies became imperative. After attempts at two villages, I felt that we were certainly in for a twenty-mile walk to Stamboul, but as usual George was equal to the occasion.

"No benzine!" cried George to the proprietor of the local Ford who refused to sell to us. "There must be benzine." The word "Angora" wove itself back and forth through the dialogue. We got benzine—a tin of Russian filth of the most abominable kind.

We got something else just as the first minaret of Stamboul gleamed against the high snow mountain tops of Asia Minor. It sounded like a bad pain somewhere in the interior of the car. Francis plumped for the gear-box, and the other two of us were for back axle. Presently there was no doubt about its being back axle. The back axle sounded as if it had a sledge-hammer inside it and every mile seemed longer than the last.

The sun began to set and the prudent Turkish birds flew homeward in long strings across the sea. The minarets, since it was Ramadan, were hung with rings of stars. There is no scene more lovely, no city more impressive than Stamboul with dark olives and cypress melting into its gloom and the lights popping out on its many hills.

We came to it through the Silivri Gate and promptly celebrated our arrival by nearly running over a tramcar. Then we went crashing and blundering down the narrow winding streets among the least guided and fastest traffic in the world to Sirkedji and the Customs House. And, there we stopped.

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6

There was an old Arab Turk in charge of the Customs House, and the first thing he said was that it was Sunday and the second thing was that we were to leave the car in the open street in front of the Customs House, and, perhaps, to-morrow, or the next day or the day after, when he had some time to spare, he would look into our credentials or arrange for some one else to do it. Meanwhile, we were not to remove so much as a button from the car.

Pyjamas? What did we want with pyjamas? Papers? No. He was firm. To all my protests, he responded with smiles, meanwhile kissing his fingers and bowing low. In the end, I had permission to take away my papers and George agreed to remain as guard while we were turned adrift with four shillings in Turkish money and the muddy clothes we stood in, in a strange city. The beauties of the Golden Horn, the twinkling lights above the shore, the shadowed palace and the blue-black point from which the old-time Sultans were wont to cast unwanted wives into the Bosphorus, the light enwreathed minarets of fourteen hundred year old St. Sophia, the lamped pyramid of Pera rising tier on tier to the old Genoan turret at its summit—all these things were lost on us. And the very first man I spoke to, to ask our way to the Grand Garage, was a gloomy person who had round velvet pads instead of ears to advertise some past indiscretion.

Eventually, we hired a droshky and found our garage and there a kindly employee took pity on us and we made a round of hard-hearted hotels. We saw five of them before one in the Petit Champs would take us in, and it was nearly midnight ere with our first good meal since Adrianople inside us, we settled into our couches lulled to sleep by the patter of Pera's many rats.

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CHAPTER VIII

IN STAMBOUL

I

THE next morning we began a stay of seven days in Constantinople.

I opened pourparlers with the Turkish authorities through the Embassy. To reach the Commercial Secretary to that august British institution you climbed a sort of penitential stair on every step of which sat a beggar. At the top was a warm welcome.

The Embassy was ready to do anything for us. The British are supposed to be slow—the Embassy was not. It at once, as represented by the Commercial Secretary, put on its hat and hailed its motor-car and we hurtled down the street and across the bridge.

This was the first of those many drives in the main streets of Constantinople which were quite the wildest part of all our journeyings. Every street is on a grade of about one in twelve, with bends every hundred yards and side streets flowing in perilously. There are trams in them and the trams roar down hills at twenty-five miles an hour. All the taxi-cabs, which are decorated with red arrows and pink roses with lights inside them and other naïve ornaments, drive at forty miles an hour and the world's finest collection of human game consisting of Greeks, Jews, Turks, Armenians, men, women, children and donkeys, paddle slowly around the fairway, all with their mouths open and mostly engaged, apparently, either in a vigorous private quarrel in which life

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and death mean nothing to them, or in a profound mathematical problem which entirely wipes out all consciousness of other things.

Sometimes, where the streets are narrow, the scene is awe-inspiring, what with the leap of the suddenly awakened mathematicians, the squeal of brakes where opposing taxi-cabs almost meet and the dizzy heave of fast drivers taking corners.

And, at the bottom of the hill, you suddenly come upon a policeman. He is mounted on a pedestal at the intersection. He wears a blue uniform, a postman's red fireman's helmet, and when he sees you he raises a lazy baton coloured like a barber's pole and makes signs *à la* Sousa or Sir Henry Wood. Very promptly everybody all round him, whether in a motor-car or on a donkey or on foot, proceeds to do what it has been doing before —that is, exactly what he likes.

After that, you need negotiate only the bridge, a train of charcoal donkeys, some more trams and a mothers' meeting of American tourists staring fixedly at a mosque out of a row of open cars, and heigho, you are at the Customs House.

The Director of Customs seemed to be exactly the double of the Chief of Police at Adrianople, but people were more polite to him. He was most distressed that we had had to leave our luggage at the Customs House. He declared that we had misunderstood the customs officer. He became even more distressed that he could not allow the British Government to guarantee our customs bond.

The British Empire, he pointed out sternly, but with perfect courtesy, was a non-suable entity. Suppose, he premised, that we were to have our car burnt and the British Empire were to refuse to pay the £75 customs duty for which we were liable in that event, where would the Turkish Treasury be if it could not sue in the Courts for the amount? We were confounded, not to say stunned

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by this argument, but we did gain something. We were allowed to drive the car to a garage and retrieve our pyjamas, on parole, so to speak.

So having arranged for that, I managed with the aid of our good friend Colonel Binns of G. & A. Baker & Company, to secure private bail for our certain departure with all our dutiable effects from Turkey in our own good time, after which there remained nothing to be done but wait for Angora to give us permission to proceed to the interior.

2

I was not in a hurry to do this as I desired to profit by the fruits of our journey up to that time; to replace our broken crown wheel and pinion; to jettison a good deal of our load which was unnecessary now the worst part of the cold season was over; to raise our footboards to make it easier for us to crawl under the car and to give some more attention to our radiator. These things were done in the Grand Garage and every day while they were in progress was a joy.

The Byzantine sky maintained its blue, reminding us of home in August. We wandered through old mosques and older churches. We watched, one afternoon, a dilapidated gentleman in a pot hat hauling cement into the dome of St. Sophia with a kerosene tin on a rope to repair the ravages which time had wrought upon that Ancient Glory for which the temples of Diana of Ephesus were robbed of their marbles that Justinian might exclaim before the Royal Door at its opening fourteen hundred years ago: "O Solomon, I have excelled thee!" We stood fascinated before the antics of a crowd which stared by the hour at a blue-gowned Chinese woman who had come off some mysterious ship to sell toy birds. We smelt the must of the Church of St. John in which it was the fashion for deposed Emperors to become porters. We had pleasant and jovial lunches at Georges in the

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Petit Champs, whose proprietor wore a velvet skull cap and often addressed you in the wrong language, and whose head waiter shaved once a week and cast expressive eyes at the pretty French actress who was making her name in Pera with those two famous Parisian ditties, "If you knew Susie" and "I want to be happy," which were at that time sweeping Turkey like a plague.

When one tired of these amusements and the gaiety of Turquoise, which Russian cooks have made one of the finest restaurants in Europe; of the quaint Mardi Gras revellers of that season in the streets; of the graded nationalities of the street of steps which begins with naughty but uninviting ladies near the water front and ends after courses of Greek, Latin, Turk, Genoese, Venetian, black-shirted Fascist of modern importation and Levantine and Spanish Jew, in German and more Turk upon its summit; of the gay officers who parade with fashionably dressed girls out towards Taxim of an afternoon; of the view across the Bosphorus beyond the palatial German Embassy—when, I say, these things pall there, one can always board a taxi and enjoy a switch-back thrill.

3

It is always an adventurous business taking a taxi in Constantinople. You appear. Immediately a taxi rank which seems half a mile long gives tongue. In front of its bright blue of vehicles hung with garish ornament, the army of drivers rises on its collective toes and stretches its collective arms to heaven.

"Monsieur!", "Moi!", "Nur zwei lira!", "Taxi!", "Sir!", "Effendim!" it shouts in the uttermost discord, each man drawing a bow at a venture upon the language which it hopes you most likely understand.

You make your choice in babel. A policeman, fondling the rosary of yellow beads which everybody from Duke to dustman carries in Pera, may intervene; but

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ordinarily you and the rank are left to your fates. Sometimes there is a free fight and sometimes, among the competitors, it is a private affair. While it goes on, you sit calmly in the taxi and smoke your cigarette. When it is over, you are driven where you want to go by the two men who are always apparently needed to propel a motor-car in Turkey—one drives and the other abuses the people you nearly kill and afterwards collects the fare.

You may even startlingly discover that these taxi mêlées are not even confined to the drivers. There was, for instance, the one in which I was involved. It happened, to my misfortune, that Charles and Henry (such, of course, were not their names, but they will serve) saw me together.

I got into Henry's car because it was a beautiful pigeon's-egg blue and because Henry had a purple feather duster with which he proceeded to dust the seat for me. Henry was very pleased to see me, but Charles wasn't. Indeed, he was so unsatisfied that I had passed him by that he left his own car to the mercy of his "tiger" and, climbing into ours, took Henry by the left eyeball and the right thumb, which is according to the Turkish Queensberry rules as practised in the best circles. Henry, of course, called him an Ottoman something and planted both his feet in the middle of his face, while Charles, in return, tried to kick him on the knee-cap and moved his facial grip to Henry's nose which was a large one.

I, being a mere passenger, sat calmly in the back seat with Henry's forgotten duster, feeling that I had no status in the fray, not even having been asked to referee. All the same, it was an engaging contest. Sometimes Henry's feet were uppermost and sometimes the remains of Charles's face which had undergone severe treatment from all Henry's offensive members.

It would have mattered nothing in the end that Charles won if he had not been vainglorious about it and essayed

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to spit upon his adversary whose head he held bent back over the driver's seat while he twisted his forelock vigorously, as if intent on removing his scalp.

Unluckily, Charles's spitting was even worse than his intention. Instead of catching Henry fairly in the left eye with the liquid evidence of his scorn, he very mistakenly managed to hit the passenger.

How the next second or two was bridged I am not sure, but I suddenly found myself getting out of the taxi, stone cold with anger. As I touched the step, I realized that I had Charles's left ear, slightly stretching and scarlet in hue, in my hand. It was a large, dirty, Oriental pancake of an ear, not the sort that a perfect gentleman would in the least care to own, but Charles seemed to have a very deep affection for it. At any rate, he was following it with intent eagerness as fast as his lungs and limbs and Henry would let him.

He followed it, indeed, until we came to a stone wall which was three feet thick and belonged to the British Embassy. When we reached it, I became seized with a burning ambition to push Charles's head through it, and I proceeded to do it, my unfortunate victim showing not the slightest disposition to meet my wishes. Every time his head hit the stonework he let out a howl like a lost soul and every time he was sufficiently in suspense to allow of his collecting his thoughts, he mustered his vagrant English and in a voice full of anguish, whined:

"Meester, please be so kind! O Meester, you devil!"

To say that Henry was unhelpful in this affray would be far from giving him his due. Every time I allowed him space he kicked Charles enthusiastically in the stomach. When it became evident that Charles could not go through the wall and also that his ear was in danger of coming off, my anger cooled and I gave him a lira, and Henry and I drove off, the latter so indignant that I had not finished off the enemy completely, that every time we came to a really dangerous corner, well

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stocked with traffic, he would turn round and expostulate to the risk of our joint lives. I was almost as glad to leave Henry as Charles had been to leave me.

4

At length we got away—one calm morning, blue-skied, Australian enough to bring tears to an exile's eyes. The car had been tortured by a cosmopolitan gang of mechanics led by a German artisan. She had had her back axle taken down by a Franco-Italian. She had been supplied with stores by a Levantine, born in Adrianople, who claimed British nationality apparently upon the sole ground that his father had once lived in Leeds. Her running boards had been raised by a Jew named Joseph, assisted by a vociferous Turk. And a whole Committee of Turkish Beys had sat upon us and decided that we were fit and proper persons to proceed to inner Turkey by a route carefully mapped by themselves.

So, in the early morning, while the cats were returning from their nocturnal perambulations and the only traffic in the streets consisted of drowsy market donkeys, we betook ourselves to the Haidar Pasha ferry wharf to wait for the ferry that should take us over the Bosphorus into Asia Minor. It came at last, and spewed its contents like a little bit of the Old Testament rather damped by experience around our feet.

No weirder nor more romantic caravan crossed our trail all the way through Asia, except one upon the Indus. First came a long and sleepy old fellow in a sort of burnous over a Roman-fashioned toga, rags trailing about his sandals; then, young men bearded and bowed down with faggots; weary women, hooded, walking, as if still in a dream and a long, plodding line of donkeys loaded with the queerest collection of merchandise the mind of man could conceive.

Two tins of honey, labelled with a petrol brand, sunk into the chafing ribs of its long-eared transport. Next a

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beast with a sleeping baby straddled across its back, bolt upright, eyes shut and lips peacefully but incongruously parted, held in place only by the gentle pressure from the fingers of a plodding mother ranged alongside, and entirely surrounded by perplexed-looking turkeys which had been tied to the pack-saddle by their legs. Poultry hung in bundles, timber, earthen chatties that had somehow found their way from the far land of India, cedar from the Lebanon, food, sheepskins in packs—with a tall and contemptuous camel in the rear, the donkey team plodded on head down and ears back, waking the echoes of the stony street. Men, women and children, some of these last at their mothers' hips, cried out in encouragement and there was a hurried patter of paws as twenty dogs fell into their places.

A voice in my ear said, as I watched, fascinated:

"Sir, I welcome you. Have you seen my engines? They was made, sir, by Meester Moseley, of England—1878. Very nice engine, sir."

Behold the Chief Engineer of the Haidar Pasha ferry (a quarter of an hour's run, fare one penny) replete in his dark blue uniform and hung about with enough gold braid to make an Admiral of the Fleet blush!

He certainly possessed some very fine reciprocating engines, relics of the war of 1878, and a fund of bright conversation in weird sea English which kept us fully entertained until we were placed ashore at Haidar Pasha —that queer little town full of memories of Florence Nightingale and the Crimea which has many crosses and memorials in its cemetery to tell of British soldiers sleeping there and a sun-drenched outlook on the slow-moving Bosphorus to make it a pleasant place to rest in.

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CHAPTER IX

WE GET OURSELVES ARRESTED

I

WE had taken to our bosoms, at Constantinople, a long, lank Turk whose name was Ismail and who, our friend Colonel Binns assured us, would prove a very present comfort in our journeyings through the first couple of hundred miles of Asia Minor. He was to set us on the road to Konia and then to leave us.

If you had met him in a Sydney street you would have said that he was not a Turk. You would probably have taken him for a ghost, for he was exactly the cut of one of those lean Australian bushmen who made themselves so unpleasant to the Boers a quarter of a century ago. Moustache and grin, drooping shoulders, cornstalk form and continual merriment in adversity were his chief characteristics, and when his sponsor said that he would be "a faithful dog," he spoke the whole truth. Ismail was "a faithful dog," and by the time we had finished we even forgave him for having once been a Turkish policeman.

With the cramped space available on the car he had to sit where he could, and in the tempestuous few days which followed there were times when he could not sit at all. For a good part of them he walked.

Our route was mapped for us down the very centre of the Ismid Peninsula, the villages which we were directed to pass through being each a few miles apart. We set out for them lightheartedly against all the best

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advice. We were told by several kind friends, none of whom had been upon the track which we were to follow, that we should have to leap from mountain to mountain. We were warned that the Castley-Catherick motor-cycle expedition had been allotted that route the year before and had very wisely put their cycles on the train past Ismid which, being a naval town, was the zone which our journey had been plotted to avoid. They told us that still another expedition during 1926 had avoided the obstacles which we were to face by going to Broussa across the Sea of Marmora, but we treated these things lightly because we had already seen the Englishman's idea of an impassable road in England.

We therefore left Haidar Pasha gaily. We went in silence. We climbed a hill on a good road. Then we climbed another. We bowled along in great style. After we had gone three or four leagues I asked Ismail where the road was going.

"O, Sinope," said Ismail lightly.

"Sinope yok (no)," I said in my brand-new Turkish. "We go to Pasha Keue."

That was all right, said Ismail, in effect, because we were just going to leave the road. And so we were. A narrow track ran away to the right up an incline which the sun had recently denuded of snow. In place of the snow was mud and stubble and a nasty piece of landscape over which drunken buffalo had apparently been dragging heavy timber.

We scaled it with many sideslips, and then our troubles began. We slithered down narrow goat-tracks. We skated upon them. We climbed grades of one in four and a half. We barged through water on the flats. We negotiated a bridge which swung giddily with us as we went over.

Sometimes we found ourselves in a wretched Turkish or Greek village, and you could always tell which were the Greek ones because most of the stones were piled in

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a heap and the Church was battered down and all the inhabitants in sight would be some old and shrinking crones peeping fearfully round corners and not coming to us till we had uttered a second peremptory call.

The further we went, the rougher and wetter the track became. For miles on end, at one stage, we traversed a waggon road so worn down and narrow that our wheels sat on the slanting banks instead of on the roadway. And, taking it altogether, I was compelled to stand on a front seat nearly the whole time guiding the car, yard by yard, while Francis drove. Also, I got down, now and then, to wade through water and brush to discover what pitfalls might be in our way.

The bog was the worst. Four or five times we stuck in it. There were half-hours when we built a track of weeds and branches. There was once when only by carrying rocks for some hundreds of yards we succeeded in getting out of a quagmire. In the end, the day's mileage was thirty-two, and just as we came to the close of it, I had to go ahead to investigate a creek crossing. Francis, following, failed to note the height of a hummock, and before we knew where we were, we were sitting on it with our front wheels in the air. Worse than that, a nasty noise warned us that something had happened to our crown wheel again.

The sun was just going down then. A mile or so away lay the village of Emerli, so I decided to camp. It was our first night in the open except for the one on the Danube, but this time there was a little firewood. Ismail, most cheerful of companions, soon had a fire going and before long, worn out, we were asleep in our valises, giving no thought towards the morning, which we left to look after itself and the argument which would arise with it.

2

Examination showed that our new crown wheel had, indeed, lost some of its teeth and that the pinion looked

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as if it had been to a Russian political meeting. We had no "spare." We were thirty-four miles from Constantinople. The next real town forward on our itinerary was Adar Bazaar which was eighty miles away. It seemed to me for the moment that the best thing I could do was to walk to Pera and remain there until we could get a spare crown wheel from London, leaving the party, which was well supplied with rations, to enjoy the scenery.

This proposal met with fierce opposition from Francis, who, having lived all his life in motor-cars or on bicycles, believes that it is the last word in ignominy to walk. He has a deep antipathy to cross-country travelling. As official mechanic, he swore that he could get the car in her limping state to Adar Bazaar. I was quite convinced that he could not, but after Ismail and I had offered ourselves as a sacrifice to the dogs of the nearby village and identified it and after we had taken a compass bearing upon our next place of call which we could see across an uninviting and thaw-soaked terrain, several miles away, I came to the conclusion that every yard we travelled at least edged us in a little towards the Haidar Pasha-Ismid railway.

Well, on in the morning we set off, on tiptoe as it were. Francis drove, swearing like fifteen troopers. I sometimes stood on the front seat guiding every inch of travel or got out and walked in front with a metaphorical red flag. Once or twice we met Turks while progressing in this fashion and their expressions were eloquent.

In front, with legs bare from the knees downwards, a thick coating of mud over all his garments and his shoes oozing liquid, they saw a man who was very evidently fleeing for his life, his arms outspread, from a mad motor-car which, roaring in low gear, pursued his every movement.

The motor-car, having no rear mud-guards, sent up tall columns of clotted mud which it dug out of the

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roadway as it went along, while the besmutted heathen in front sent up columns of directions and profanity.

Turning, after you had passed them, you beheld the spectators still rooted to the spot upon the hill-side a mile away waiting for the capture and slaughter of the Devil Waggon's prey and, to be perfectly candid, Francis would sometimes have liked to oblige them, seeing the places he was forced to drive through.

Presently, we reached a series of tall hills and our Waterloo. They were desolate hills with slippery surfaces and heavy pulls and the third of them, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country, brought us to a full stop, within a few hundred yards of the village which we had been able to see five weary hours before from Emerli. Our pinion behaved like a sledge-hammer; Knowles was out of the car only just in time to place a chock under a rear wheel and prevent us from running down the hill backwards, which accident would have saved us a lot of subsequent worry.

As matters stood, there was only one course to follow. I had to get back to Constantinople, cable to London for another crown wheel and pinion and fill in the intervening time having the back axle thoroughly overhauled to ascertain if possible the cause of our troubles.

How to get there, though? We were forbidden to go on to the main road which runs along the shore of the Gulf of Ismid. Our passports were visaed only for certain towns and villages. Our clothing was such as to make us fairly conspicuous and, even had we not been at all these disadvantages, we knew that we were some uncertain distance from the railway.

Eventually, after careful study of the map, I made up my mind to walk to Pendik and catch a train to Haidar Pasha. Ismail fully approved of this course till he found that he also was to walk to Pendik; then he seemed to have his doubts.

After lunch we started.

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It had been bitterly cold during the night, but so soon as Providence found that we were going to do some walking the sun beat down upon us with tropical heat.

Ismail said he knew exactly where Pendik was and that the easiest way was straight ahead of our noses. He also said that it was about two saat (i.e., about six miles) away. So we walked six miles to begin with—straight down a tussocky hill, across a swamp, up another hill covered with nettles and then to the edge of a declivity, which was almost a precipice.

Here I asked Ismail how far off we were now and he reiterated quite cheerfully that we were still six miles from our destination. So we clambered down the slope, walked several miles along a winding river-bed, crossed three fields, climbed some more hills and, eventually, about fourteen miles from where we started and dripping with perspiration, we saw the neat railway station in front of us with the blue waters of the Gulf of Ismid beyond.

At first glimpse, the whole population of the platform seemed to be made up of naval officers, naval police, gendarmes, civil police and station officials. I expected every minute to be asked for my passport, but the fact that I wore a light overcoat over my other clothes, that I was swarthy enough to be a village Turk myself and that Ismail, who was by no means easy in his mind, talked to me incessantly in fluent Turkish (of which I understood one word in twenty-five or thereabouts) for the whole of the minutes that elapsed before the train came in, enabled us to make the shelter of a third-class carriage and, eventually, Pera.

3

Five days passed while the King's Messenger brought our crown wheel and pinion from London by train. On the first day I sent a Ford to bring Francis and the back axle to us. Being Turks, the drivers of it were able to traverse the main road for most of the journey.

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A week later we rescued Knowles from his solitude. He had not been enjoying life, because of the hardness of the ground and the lack of fuel, but he had made many friends in the village; had sung his famous Oriental ballads; had had several minor articles of furniture stolen from the car and rose from his blankets in which he was peacefully sleeping to hail us with a shout of joy.

In the afternoon we moved—nearly seven miles—and camped early with some more breakages. Half a day sufficed to repair them next morning and we finished the evening after a twenty-mile run, which was, in truth, better to be described as a crawl or a wallow or a scramble or all three combined. At sunset we were at Tache Keupri. We all remembered Tache Keupri for quite a long time afterwards. It was situated on the top of a high and bleak hill, up which it was only possible to rush the car a hundred yards at a time, checking her when she showed a tendency to stop. It was full of gendarmes and villagers and, so soon as we began to hold parley with the inhabitants, of such tumult as had never been heard since the days of Babel.

Ismail started it—by asking the way to another delectable village named Tchboukli-Osman. The head gendarme walked away a few yards and pointing to a dizzy goat-track winding uncertainly down the hill-side, said: "There!"

At once the argument began. I demanded that we should leave Tchboukli-Osman out of the itinerary, since the road was impossible, and send our profound apologies to the mayor. The Chief of the Gendarmes said in effect that the mayor (or whatever head there was) would be expecting us since he would have been warned by the authorities of our approach, and if we did not arrive within reasonable time, he would undoubtedly ask awkward questions. He said that he did not care a twopenny dump for the mayor's anguish of mind, but he had a deep regard for his own work and he liked the

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locality which he would beyond question be asked to leave if he allowed us to deviate from our true course.

While the debate raged, it became dark and I asked for shelter; whereupon we were ushered into a room in the local guest house. It was a large, clean room in an upper story of a hut with sheep in a fold underneath us and warm mats neatly rolled along the wall and a steaming bowl of sheep's milk to nourish us.

When we had fed, Ismail said that he would go and have another interview with the gendarmes. He said that there was no policy like set a gendarme to catch a gendarme and, as he had been one himself, he felt confident that he would not come back empty-handed. Also, please, effendim, might he take some tea and some figs and some cigarettes and a few other little items by way of bait?

Off toddled Ismail, smiling as if he had not been labouring the day through in the mud and remained abroad so long that I wondered whether he had come to a bad end. But at dawn, he was with us carrying the treaty of peace. We were to avoid the goat-track—it was literally that—but we were also to avoid, like the plague, the city of Ismid, which was a naval depot closed to all foreigners. When we came to a main road we were to turn to our left till we came to a cross-road, and after that our troubles would be over, as, beyond Ismid, our course was indicated only by a few big towns.

Off we set, and after the first mile of clambering in the mud the track improved until it became a fairly good earth road running along the side of a hill-top, so that looking down to the left gave one very much the sensation of gazing out of an aeroplane. We were all enthralled with this outlook except Ismail and he seemed to be in deadly uneasiness until a broad ribbon of white road suddenly wound itself along the edges of a fertile valley ahead of us. Whereupon he became fairly exuberant, and when we reached that road and

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began to speed along it at thirty miles an hour—thirty-two miles in one day was our best stretch since Constantinople—he began to sing.

"This is fine," said Knowles. "Open her up a bit, Frank. Let's see what she can do."

4

We turned a corner and there was something in view which at once arrested our attention. It was a man by the edge of the road dressed in the high shako of the gendarmerie, with khaki uniform and all complete. He had a Ross Rifle with ugly notches cut in the butt and a bayonet gleaming on the end of it, and he had one hand held stubbornly up in the air.

I tried very hard not to see that hand, but it was insistent.

We stopped.

"Veseka!" (passport), said the gentleman with the bayonet. We produced our mighty wad of documents. Ismail looked at me as much as to say: "Let me manage this!" and the next moment was heard asking politely for an officer. The bayonet led him to a guard house and there were voices which presently broke into a tornado. Then a telephone bell rang and Ismail was heard making a speech.

"He'll win," I remarked confidently to a doubtful Birtles, who can always be depended on to view circumstances in the most gloomy possible light.

Ismail did. We heard the other voices die down and in a minute or two he came out with the prize, which seemed to consist of several more gendarmes with rifles and bayonets and cartridges. He had, also, obviously acquired such a heavy load of care that I almost wondered for a second whether we were to be lined up against the guard-room wall and disposed of.

"Ah, Meester Ellis, we go Ismid," said Ismail, spreading his hands in a despairing gesture.

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"I'm blest if we do," said I, getting ready to fight a forlorn hope. I flatly refused to go to Ismid. I told the officer that I had been expressly forbidden to set foot in Ismid in the interests of international peace. But the officer was obdurate. He put some bayonets on board the car and there was nothing for it but to turn round and go.

It was a lovely morning, but we did not enjoy the weather. The blue gulf with the obsolete "Goeben" lying grey and gigantic upon its surface gave us not a single thrill. We lost the æsthetic satisfaction which we might have been expected to derive from the sight of a hill clothed in flat roofs to its very top and so buried in white and pink blossom that it looked like one vast, gigantic flowering peach tree. Down the main street of Ismid we went, the hucksters by the railway line which runs through it hurriedly making way for us, people coming to shop doors at the sound of our open exhaust. We scattered pack teams of donkeys laden with scented tobacco and presently we drew up at the gates of the Navy Yard.

In went the gendarmes and out came a naval officer uniformed exactly like a British naval flag commander.

"I am Djemal Bey," he said. "I regret to inform you that you are under open arrest. These damn fools of gendarmes have brought you into a naval zone and you must stay till we have permission from Angora for you to leave. I hope it will be only twenty-four hours. Meanwhile, there is a good hotel where you can stop, and except that you will be in charge of a policeman, you are free."

And that was our welcome to Ismid.

"This is all very unreasonable," said I to Djemal Bey hotly.

"It is," said Djemal. "In fact, as one might say, it is positively bloody. But don't blame us. Blame the gendarmes. To-morrow you will be free, I hope."

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"Well, a day off won't do us any harm."

I looked round and saw the face of Ismail sunk in gloom.

"Cheer up, Ismail," I cried. "We'll be out of here to-morrow."

"We never get out," said Ismail hopelessly. And we all laughed.

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CHAPTER X

IN TURKISH CUSTODY

I

BEHOLD us then ensconced in Djemal Bey's "very good" hotel.

We had a front room and a fine view of the main street. The padding donkeys laden with rich, brown tobacco leaf, going to the market lower down against the wall; the gay children playing hide and seek across the railway line; the continual military and naval procession; the hilarious dances of the club over the way and the spectacle of the fat old gentleman who dressed himself in purple and fine linen every morning in front of his window were all accessible to us.

We certainly had a little trouble when we arrived at the Hotel Ismid in persuading the proprietress that we did not all desire to sleep in one bed.

She did her best to make us. She pointed out that it was the custom of the country and showed a more friendly spirit beside making less work for the staff—which meant her good self and one small boy whose life seemed to be a hard one. She was quite sulky about it for a day or two, but we all soon became friendly.

She was a young woman, which was fortunate for us, since she appeared never to have been washed from birth. She wore the usual black Turkish gown, that nun-like dress of the East which ordinarily goes with a yashmak; but she had no yashmak, because Turkish law has abolished Turkish clothing in general and

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in particular made it an offence to keep women in purdah.

Ergo, the face of Mrs. Smith (as I christened her for convenience), a simple, unsophisticated countenance with yesterday's smear of butter across its cheek, was visible for all the world to admire.

We often had occasion to admire it and sometimes it came to us unexpectedly. Mrs. Smith had never heard of the rite known as knocking at the door. She just came shuffling in—at any old hour—a practice in which she was not singular.

For instance, there was obviously only one towel in the hotel, which, though we never used it, was hung, for show, in our bedroom, and if any other denizen felt that he needed it he just arrived unannounced and took it—or wiped the egg off his moustache and left it.

With Mrs. Smith, the zero hour was generally early. Mostly she chose the time when you were having your bath in a pint of water with the aid of a golf sponge.

Then she would enter. She would take no preliminary manner of notice of you whatever, but strolling to your cigarette case help herself to one of your choicest Cercles d'Orient which she would light with much gusto.

"Breakfast?" she would say, fixing your blushing and unclothed form with a totally disinterested eye as you wrestled with your underclothing.

"Dookoos yamurghtah, aiyee pish-mish" (Nine eggs well cooked!), you would shout through your singlet. "Get out of it, woman. Haide git, you shameless female!"

"Chai?" (Tea?) she would demand imperturbably, and not till she had taken your whole order would she move.

After an hour's profane interval the breakfast would come.

The nine eggs would be in a cracked saucer. They were invariably fresh from the farmyard, with bits of

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straw and all the other things apt to cling to eggs strung all over them. So far from being "aiyee pish-mish," they would almost be raw—just slightly warmed, with their yolks beautifully translucent. Of course, there were no spoons, and the spectacle of three wild men with awkwardly shaped whiskers devouring those eggs was a sight for the gods. After the eggs we had the ekmek, hunks of brown whole rye bread, and the tea. You could shout till you were blind that you wanted tea by the litre. You could provide the vessel for it (and have to ask for its return), but the tea always came in the same way—a sherry-coloured tea in three small sherry-sized glasses. In vain the awful bush language of Francis Birtles made the rafters ring. Mrs. Smith merely took a cigarette and went away, letting in the stench of the Oriental latrine next door, as she went out.

There were no other meals to be had in the hotel beside breakfast, but we did not want them. We should not have wanted the breakfast if we could have got it anywhere else, but necessity kept us to a matutinal egg diet, the dessert to which was Civil Police Officer Halil.

2

Halil appeared very soon after our arrival. He looked more like a good type of South German than a Turk and he was dressed very neatly in European fashion. The curious crowd which had gathered about us scattered like chaff before Halil, who greeted us as brothers.

"Ha, you are under arrest. Warum?" (Why?) he cried gaily in German. "But you may go everywhere, my friends! You may see all you wish. I am your guide . . ."

He muttered on cheerfully. He had a garage for us in no time. He had our baggage upstairs. He had coffee brought by a man in yellow trousers. He made us as comfortable as a gaoler could. Might I send a telegram? I asked. Most certainly I might, he said.

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So we went to the Post Office and sent telegrams and next morning they were brought back to me with the message that the Post Office had never heard of the addresses to which they were sent and that therefore it was no use sending them. At the same time the Post Office did not feel that it was worth while to send back the money I had paid it. And when I spoke to the postmaster about it, he said he did not understand.

In an hour Halil and I were seeing the sights, arm in arm. Ismid was built on the principle of everything of a kind in one street and a street for everything. Only the bootblacks and the gilded naval officers seemed to be ubiquitous and on a calculation there were a post captain and two bootblacks to every square yard. Halil enjoyed them as much as I did, and as he showed me about he used everything to point his philosophy about war—which meant life with him, since he had spent nearly all his adult existence in fighting or watching some one else fight.

Every morning while we were waiting for release he and I would betake ourselves and our cigarettes to the tea gardens on the margin of the gulf and, with our coffee before us, discuss all things under the sun and wonder about the eternal "Why" of them.

Some queer out-of-the-way places we saw through the medium of Halil's narratives. Now, we went to Kiel to watch the queues of dry-eyed German women breaking into sobs when the ships came limping home through the dawn fog of the morning after Jutland; now, we were in a dancehall at Hamburg singing "Du kleines Maedchen"; or again tramping the highlands of Anatolia on the trail of the Greeks, the paper of that grim chase being the careless-lying corpses of the Turkish villagers. We saw the "Goeben" now in front of us come limping in, in 1915, and the Kemalists entering Angora and the triumph of British forces after the Turkish surrender, when a band of British officers

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came through the Dardanelles and ordered the German commander-in-chief out of his headquarters at the Pera Palace Hotel through an interpreter, who had fled for his life from Stamboul upon the declaration of war three years previously, losing all the accumulations of a lifetime.

And every time Halil related an atrocity or an event he philosophized.

"See that hill! That is where the Armenians lived, mein Lieber. Some of them are underneath—we put them there. An unpleasant people. But why should they die while you and I live? Warum?

"And the Germans—they used to sing 'God with us,' but now so many who did the singing are with God instead, which may be more comfortable. But why?

"And you and I sitting here—if I had met you nine years ago I should have tried to push a bayonet through you, and now here we sit and I have just bought you coffee, mein Lieber."

"You haven't. I paid for that lot."

"You shouldn't. It was my turn. Warum? Why did you pay out of your turn?"

The seabirds would swoop down almost on our heads looking for crumbs. Pinnaces would put off from the "Goeben," which had never been to sea for years, and sometimes we would hum a song together till it was time to go back and see if any release had come for us from Angora.

3

The twenty-four hours which our optimist friend of the Navy had told us might elapse before we were allowed to leave turned itself into days.

I felt that our letters, except the ones which told a friend that we were not ill at ease, were not being delivered. Always the answer of the police was: "To-morrow!" I should not have been so worried

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about the disturbance but for the chafing of the proud spirit of Francis, who seemed to be continually in the wars.

You left him with the car, on a work of benevolent destruction whereby I had decided that we could reduce the weight of our load by a hundredweight or two, and if you returned an hour later you were almost certain to find him telling the Turks in general, via an interested but fortunately uncomprehending audience, exactly what he thought of their country and hospitality. Usually, he promised them that an army would come from England to deal with them. Moreover, he threatened by propaganda to spoil the chances of the next Turkish loan, and he was fully persuaded that if I would drop my diplomatic attitude, call the Governor and the Naval Commandant perverted sons of guns and offer to punch their noses, we would be free in no time.

As I had a distrustful feeling that our captors would like nothing better than a display of bad temper which would justify them in feeling insulted enough to send us back to Constantinople, I felt very uneasy about it, more especially as our Overlander constantly made plans which he was quite capable of attempting to carry out, for leaving Ismid in the night and finding his way to Stamboul with a view to telling the world our woes. This procedure would inevitably have led to his being shot or captured by sentries and, as I had given parole for his remaining, the result would have possibly have been unpleasant for all of us. Possibly a hope that Birtles or Knowles would do something like this had influenced the Turks when they asked only me for a parole. So I drank coffee hard with all the functionaries who were likely to be able to help, trying to get permission to go myself to Angora and negotiate our release. It was all in vain. The days came and went slowly, but were full of interest. Sometimes, as on market day, the streets would be full of strange people tangled in

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stranger caravans—a cartload of torpedoes mixed with sweetmeat sellers, tobacco trains of donkeys, bootblacks, ironworkers, all crying their wares at the top of their voices. The beggars would be there and the charcoal sellers and the barbers.

All the afternoon you would hear the cries of the hucksters "Turnips—ten piastres—effendis—turnips," and later there would be dances and music, a medley of noise which died down near midnight and left the dark to the tender mercies of the cats and the mosque drummer doing his rounds to the town to wake the Faithful from their slumbers just after midnight.

In Ramadan one is not supposed to eat between daylight and dusk, though in these degenerate days, except in the far interior, you see none going hungry. But every night the drummer would come down the street, beating a roll and crying in front of the houses that there was no God but God and, O Faithful, it was time to arise and eat. About the ghostly patter of his feet and the rattle of his sticks there would come, faint upon the night air through your window, the distant strains of "I want to be happy," evidence of the lewd Western habits of some of the officers on the hill who, with their wives, were indulging in those religious exercises so much favoured by the worshippers of the great god Jazz.

And after the drummer would come the early morning traffic, so that often there would be little sleep for anybody.

4

Every evening we dined at the railway station and saw the Angora mail train in, wishing we were on board and listening to the views of Francis who could not drink beer because he did not like it and had had to wash down his dinner with red Greek wine because water was unsafe and all boiled drinks were served in thimblefuls.

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I hoped that one night I might see a British face on the train, but there were none. We seemed to be not only the only British in Ismid—there were three Germans at the Electric Light Station—but also the only British travellers in Turkey.

The next morning I would go off and continue drinking coffee with officialdom or talking about the lovely girls of Hit with Djemal Bey or everything in general with Halil, trying to get permission to go to Pera. After nearly a week of it I got Ismail away. Ismail developed a sick wife in Stamboul. She became so constantly sick that he had an inexpressible longing to see her, and as several junior officials had a sick pocket, a compromise was easy. Ismail went. After our own experiences we certainly did not expect to see Ismail again; but I did not go to meet the train the next evening, because it appeared inadvisable to be seen meeting him if he did come.

The train came and went and no Ismail. But at about an hour after its leaving Halil arrived—a new Halil. No more did Halil arrive with a hail: "How goes it, my dear fellow?" This obsequious person knocked respectfully at the door, clicked his heels, bowed from the waist to the muddle of whiskers which was myself and presented me with the card of the First Secretary to the British Embassy at Pera.

"The noble gentleman who was on the train asked me to give you this with his kindest regards and affectionate compliments," said Halil, "and begged me to intimate that he is proceeding at once to Angora and will arrange that you are instantly released."

It was very evident that with the most artistic diplomacy, the First Secretary, who was probably bound for Angora on other business, had done what is called "the heavy" with Halil. For the brief time we remained, his philosophy was offered with a deference which had not hitherto flavoured it.

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Hard on his heels came Ismail, full of zeal and bubbling over with his adventures. He had, so to speak, carried the good news to Ghent, and Ghent had sent him back armed with letters and comforts. There was a cheery note from Colonel Binns, who, ever thoughtful, had sent us copies of the latest "Times," which Knowles fell upon with a howl of joy, since he could never accustom himself to being without the morning's news.

After that our bondage was short. Within thirty-six hours we had our release and waiting not a single moment upon our going, I hurriedly drank twelve cups of coffee with twelve captors; took their twelve polite cigarettes; tipped Mrs. Smith of the Hotel Ismid; rescued such of our belongings as had not disappeared at the hotel; and at half-past three in the afternoon recommenced our journey towards the interior of Asia Minor.

There was need to lose no time. We were a fortnight late. We had a laggard car which we could not drive at any pace without danger. We had wet roads for hundreds of miles ahead of us, perhaps more detention and breakages and the Indian wet season approaching very fast. Already, it seemed that, with our late start from London and the delays, we could not reach Burma in time to defeat the rains; but I made up my mind that if late and early work could do it, it would be done. Therefore, it was a case of no more sleeping in towns where drowsy hotel staffs found breakfast for you at eight o'clock, but of lying in your valise and rising with the first streak of dawn.

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ISMAIL, BIRTLES AND CAPTAIN KNOWLES

SPRING IN BITHYNIA

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CHAPTER XI

FROM THE HOME OF THE NICÆAN CREED TO THE CITY OF THE BLACK CASTLE

I

ANCIENT Bithynia is a fascinating kingdom in the early spring. It is so green, so steeped in leisure, so full of the white swirl of snow water tumbling down from the hills; so frothed with peach blossom, hiding its flat-roofed townships. One cannot wonder that of old time the West invested it in a sort of twilight glamour. Even Ismid—the metropolitan Nicodemia of ancient history—with all its pretence of bustle, lives in a sunny, sleepy air, and as we went out of it down the white road which leads to the Pontic shore and fell, then, into narrow paths so venerable that the footsteps of the ages had worn them into deep drains, we appeared to come into another world.

Truly, a lazy sort of a place, this new universe. The inhabitants, more Caucasian, less touched with Latin, than those of Pera, lay cow-eyed in the shade of their walls and gazed at us seemingly without much interest. Brooks gleamed all round us and sometimes we bowed to avoid a shower of white flowers thrown in our faces as we forced our way through the overhanging bushes.

Now and then we passed through a village; now, across a roaring torrent with a spindly bridge which creaked and swung and protested under our weight, raising its voice loudly enough to drown our prayers; now,

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down a broad avenue with trees bigger than we had seen since we left England, the new plane leaves valiantly green. The bridges were too dangerous to risk except as a last resource, and there were explorings for stream crossings and halloings among the timber of the hillsides, flounderings among the boulders in the strong running streams and usually a perilous passage across the bridge in the end, with half a dozen donkeys asleep at the other end and their masters, open-mouthed and waiting for unrealized salvage should we tumble through the decking and die.

On the morning after we left Ismid, the immobile grey blue of the Sabandja Geul spread itself suddenly on our left through a mist of new-born leaf, and about noon, having spent two hours in a morass, came a busy hour at Adar Bazaar in a street full of policemen, buying raisins and bread and fresh meat at the open stalls in the streets and sharing coffee with the laughing gendarmes. Out again in the early afternoon into a land which gradually climbed grassy hills from which the plain behind us opened out as an entrancing panorama. Quaintly striped birds flew suddenly overhead with a whir. Patient buffaloes plodded by us with their creaking carts and every few yards we passed one of a mighty crawling army of small tortoises engaged in a slow migration, all travelling in one direction as if they owned eternity.

By and by we were face to face with mountains covered with burgeoning oak, another brawling stream and a gap between two peaks which set us careering precariously along a narrow road high over the rushing Sakaria River. A brown, turbulent stream is the Sakaria, carrying the snows of a dozen small ranges to the sea. It looked a very unpleasant place to fall into and the track along its side was designed to take bullock waggons travelling in single file. Moreover, that track was full of high mounds, so that you never knew till you were

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over them whether or no your luck would plunge you suddenly in the midst of a frantic donkey team all unwontedly pleading with its masters to allow it to take a bath in the stream eight feet below, rather than meet you at close quarters.

Once we met a bullock waggon which had lost its wheel. Once we stopped in a village where every eye glued itself to the cracks in the unpainted wooden walls of the houses and Ismail had a chesty time holding parley with the chief authority who wished us to wait, so far as we could understand, for a few days until he had decided that we were fit and proper persons to proceed. We saw villages which had been wiped out in Armenian massacres. We saw some that had not been wiped out, perched high in curious pockets on bare mountain sides, and as the landscape opened up towards twilight we saw more mud and again more mud. We stayed fast twice in it and at dusk came into a townlet where I resolved to rest till morning.

2

The headman with the simple courtesy of all the village fathers offered us bread and shelter. He lived in the second story of a flat, *pisé* dwelling with a strong gate barring the yard, his cattle on the ground floor and a twelve-foot wall all round his household to discourage unasked visitors whom he further advised of his habit towards them by means of a satisfying display of business-like loopholes.

After a courtesy visit to this mansion, I felt that we would prefer to sleep in the street. It seemed cruel to tantalize the myriads of little inhabitants with so rich a diet as ourselves for a single night only, so I borrowed an iron brazier and some charcoal and we laid our camp in the roadway opposite our friend's gateway. All the village came and warmed its hands at our brazier while we cooked our evening meal, and we had some friendly

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converse about the war and by eight o'clock we were under blankets.

Not to sleep, however. There was, in the first place, a buffalo just through the wall behind us who seemed to be suffering from a bad cough and an irritation which impelled him to rise periodically from his wallow and rub his horn against a tree with a noise like an ungreased bandsaw. And at midnight there broke out a solemn and insistent riffle of drums in village after village for miles around.

"Womp! womp! womp!" went the drum of our village for four or five minutes at a time and then would rise a sad, musical voice crying to the Faithful to awake for their morning meal. It was piercingly cold, and when I looked out of the corner of my sleeping gear, tucked well round my nose, half darkness lay like a mist on a landscape lit by flat stars in a black sky.

"Womp! womp! womp!" went the drum against a rattling background of other kettling which echoed back from the hill villages in the distance.

After what seemed a long time the drummer reached us and gave a lusty performance, standing shadowy against the wall.

"Here," thought I, "is where one of these fellows dies," as I waited for Francis to rise and slay him. But nobody in the camp moved except a slinking dog which had been craftily stealing a corner of Knowles's tarpaulin for a bed. So, after a little, the heralds of the dawn left us, calling gently several times: "Wake up, brothers, it is time to eat." They were succeeded by a biting wind which even a fiery sun, arriving three hours later, could not warm.

We breakfasted early among the ground mists and drove slowly up a frost-touched valley. We crossed the Anatolian railway line and began to climb the hills. They looked like all the mountains we had seen since Middle Europe; cloaked with the stunted Valonia oaks

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and a wealth of those many small shrubs which are as familiar on the shores of Sydney Harbour as they are in Bulgaria or Phrygia.

The road made royal curves round many spurs, imitating the flight of an eagle, and at every swoop the valley below diminished in scale. The housetops became insignificant white squares, the tall poplars feather-crested wands, the stream a silver line drawn through a shadow-mottled green floor, across which ant-like bullocks crawled behind Lilliputian ploughs. Every detail was clear but drawf-like, even to the high villages in their clefts upon mountain-sides seen so far away that the scrub upon them was visible only with the aid of a glass.

It was an aeroplane view, one of the loveliest, and the further we went, the clearer and colder became the air and the brighter the sun, and the longer the vista of the Sakaria Valley which narrowed towards the east for what seemed endless miles, until it disappeared, tenuously, behind a curtain of grey mist stretched between its enclosing mountains.

After a couple of hours' steady climbing with rests to allow our boiling radiator to cool, we began to descend and at once the character of the landscape changed. The road ran straight where it had been curving and it was wide and well made with a deep foundation and very little cambered—a marching road, not a fast-driving road. Soon, too, where there had been no traffic but a scurrying rabbit, we observed all the usual rural travellers of an Oriental early morning: the black-robed women, the sleeping children, the men with their cudgels and their weird merchandise of handcuffed chickens and led goats, leek baskets, tobacco bundles and faggots of firewood.

We overtook their procession, not too fast to note the uniformity of their dress and the simplicity of their countenances which relegated them out of the right to

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live later than in some century behind the Middle Ages.

At intervals, clean streams, in which the marketmen's dogs disported themselves, crossed the road, and the poplars blew green on silver boles above us. We came to a little villa with a round-peaked roof before which an old gentleman in a Phrygian hat, with a cloak that might have come out of a Virgilian frieze about his shoulders, sat drowsily in the morning warmth.

"Why," said I to myself, rubbing my eyes as I had done a dozen times before since we reached the Balkans, "this might be old Rome come to life."

Almost at the word, a walled town rose before our eyes. Its ramparts were of the fine red brick of which London wall was built. Its outline had the asymmetry of the old cities. Its triple gates, its turrets, its curtain wall, its sling platforms—all undoubtedly came complete out of ancient history and told that the hills opposite once must have been full of the wildest barbarians. In the distance, it looked as if it had been built yesterday and if, on nearer view, it proved dilapidated and the guards who topped its turrets turned out to be Turkish policemen, the triple gates with their battered marble bas-reliefs, the stream of archaicly vestured people beside their loaded donkeys, the ancient Greek joke on a wall about the morals of some long dead citizeness (or was it the State?) named Lycia, all served to preserve the illusion that we had stepped back, at least, into the reign of Constantine.

"Where are we, Ismail?" I asked.

"Isnik," said Ismail. "And it is a very bad place. There is much fever."

Isnik—Nicæa—Lysimachus—Antigonea!

We were in the city of many names that a son of Philip of Macedon founded. It was one of the glories of Asia Minor in its day. It saw the meeting of the great Councils four hundred years apart which framed

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the Nicene Creed and settled the calculation of Easter and discoursed so ineffectually about the worship of images. It was capital of a great Crusaders' State. And all that was left of its glory was an immense shell of ramp and bastion, a few Byzantine roofs, a medley of vast, half-buried pillars and random-thrown marbles, streets worn concave with myriads of feet through two thousand five hundred years and the lingering ghost of old sartorial fashion, clothing inhabitants who had managed unconsciously to retain a Byzantine air in their costumes as well as their ancient simplicity of countenance.

Most of material Nicæa, however, was given over to orchards and market gardens, but for all that I should have liked to remain a day or two had not the gathering clouds above Lake Ascania (to-day, the Isnik Geul) suggested that it would be wise to keep on travelling while it was still fine.

We climbed out of the ruined city from a flat plain into a meandering road, passing through groves of gnarled olive trees into more scrubby mountains, and, ere long, we had paused again for two hours in a road crevasse full of plastic mud and small flints.

The snow-capped line of Mount Olympus, which of yore was in the domain of that King Crœsus who was captured by the Persians and nearly burnt upon a pyre, rose across a land blazing with sunshine and, oh joy, intersected by the good road which runs into Yenishehr and out again to Bilijek from the port of Mudania on the Sea of Marmora.

It seemed strange to be able to travel at twenty-five miles an hour, but we made the most of it till we reached Bilijek, a new, white-painted town with broad streets upon the margin of dark and gloomy gorge full of great rocks and the whir of eagles. Of course there was a police inspection to be gone through before we set out for Seugeud and a sad ceremony of farewell with Ismail,

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who seemed most loth to leave us, even with a fat roll of Turkish currency in his pocket.

"Good-bye!" he shouted as we started on another climb into those dark and inhospitable mountains where a few weeks afterwards poor Cocks, the Indian aviator, disappeared. "You will come back."

The last we saw of him was a thin, lonely figure waving a frantic felt hat, with two hopeful eagles hovering in the background, both presumably praying that in his excitement he would tumble off the edge of the road and reappear four hundred feet below on the rocks, already dissected for the benefit of the aquila family.

3

We ourselves thought several times before we camped in the evening that we might feed the eagles, for the roads became tortuous, and given to having wet clay surfaces. They were often narrowed by breakaways at the edges where only careful navigation saved us from sending tons of earth hurtling into the valley below and following in its wake. Higher and higher we climbed with every mile, and the higher we went the colder it became, till we camped on a bleak roadside twenty miles from Eskishehr, where they have replaced a prehistoric oracle with a central Turkish flying station. We shivered through a long night in our blankets with the unsatisfying knowledge that in the morning we should have no means of making a fire.

Daylight saw us away again and eight o'clock in Eskishehr. It was a bleak, untidy town, but I managed to buy there a massive Turkish stirrup iron from which I made a new radiator cap and some very bad lubricating oil and we got a few very complicated directions for reaching Kutahia, our next city of call, which we left, late in the afternoon, before the police should catch and cross-examine us.

In the morning, Afion Karahissar, once a Hittite

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capital, revealed itself as a most extraordinary city in a most extraordinary position. Its Black Castle, from which it takes its name, was in its very heart sitting on the top of a column of rock in a most ideal situation for pouring boiling oil upon a wretched aggressor below. Behind were darkling mountains rising sheer and dwarfing a huddled, tile-roofed town which seemed to be doing its very utmost to efface itself. In front, weirdly enough, lay a bleak, level valley, wind-swept and marshy in strong contrast to the stern hills.

We were soon to discover that it was Turkish Sabbath in Afion. The place was hung with the auctioneer's-red banners of Kjemal's nation and the inhabitants were lounging about in attitudes of ease. The Ottoman Bank was closed as if it had been sealed and we had two gallons of petrol left out of the heavy array of tins with which we had left Pera. Also, we had two liras in Turkish money and naught beside except some English notes.

As we were urgently wanting to make up for lost time, I put it to the garage proprietor, after I had his petrol safely in our tanks, that I should pay him in English money. He said it was a splendid idea and he did not care whether he had English pounds or Turkish pounds; but when I offered to give him one English pound for nine and a half Turkish pounds, which was current exchange, he showed signs of apoplexy. He pointed out to me that a Bradbury was obviously a much smaller piece of money than a lira and that Turkey was a great, free and emancipated country.

Then he said it was Sunday and provided I would leave the car with him till next morning, he would consult the bank. I reminded him, then, that I had his petrol and that I was honest, and that if he found I wasn't he could catch me to-morrow at Konia. At this stage seventy other Turks joined in the discussion and our merchant sent for the police and we stood in a sort of human heap which had become entirely unintelligible

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to itself or anybody else. Eventually, the blessed arrival of the inevitable German-speaking war veteran saved us.

For a consideration, he told the garage proprietor that our notes were the best in the world and we were soon on the way again, skirting snow-clad hills and alternately baking in a hot sun and shivering in the blasts which came down from the mountains. The main road was torn up and, fortunately for us, an earth track ran beside it as far as the flower-embosomed village of Chai, where the highway once more became passable.

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CHAPTER XII

AN INTERLUDE IN PHILOMELIUM

I

AT midday we were startled to find that we had covered over eighty miles and we saw ourselves in Konia by evening, but we had reckoned without the police, who were waiting for us at a benighted city called Ak Shehr, which means White Town. It chanced, unfortunately, that we were out of bread and stopped to buy it at Ak Shehr, whereupon a multitude gathered round us.

I don't know whether the police lieutenant at Ak Shehr keeps a diary; but, if he does, his account of our visit will read somehow as follows, if he be a truthful officer:

"Ellis Malgomm Henerri, a very dirty subject of England, (or it might be Spain), whose father was Thomas James Ellis and whose mother's name was quite unintelligible (both parents still living) and who has a wife and one child at present in England; who was born at some place which it took me half an hour to put into Turkish, in a country I never heard of called Australia, on a date we could not agree upon in the Ottoman calendar, arrived here to-day and stopped to buy bread. (He is proceeding from London to Konia with two vilely dirty companions, all tourists, expecting to reach their destination to-night.)

"Ellis Effendi, who was in a disreputable condition of filth and whiskers, had the misfortune to draw up in front of the gendarmerie and looked, at first, a fit subject for

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oppression. As we had our new uniform and highly polished boots on and as there were several illegal but enticing little yashmaks floating about as well as a number of unveiled and admiring female faces we said to ourselves: 'Let us be hard on this travelling menagerie and impress the population!' We therefore put a cordon of nine gendarmes round the car and asked our visitors for their passports, which they very inadvisedly gave to us. We then sent all their documents to the Commandant, who was at his private house, and settled down to fill in the few hours before he should return them by tramping round and ordering the crowd about like a herd of bullocks.

"After an hour, our prisoners seemed to become restless and that vile person, their leader, strode into the office and in a strange mixture of profane Turkish, Persian, German and various foreign languages demanded that his passports should be handed back at once. I could not understand him when he became really angry, but he made me most uneasy by his continual use of the name of Kjemal Pasha and by waving in front of me a document with a large red seal which he said emanated from some potentate named King George. He did not look like the friend of kings, but the seal was very big and very red, and the free and easy way in which our captive introduced the name of our President every time his Turkish invective ran out was most disconcerting.

"I therefore, not without trepidation, detached a gendarme from the car guard and sent him for the passports which the Commandant had, no doubt, intended to keep to read with his breakfast next morning.

"On their arrival, I spent half an hour putting rubber stamps on them with the aid of three subordinates and superintending the departure of the travellers who, as I am fully convinced, were the most desperate criminals we have seen in these parts.

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"I feel that we achieved great credit with the ladies and greatly impressed hoi polloi. Ellis Effendi, for some reason, appeared to be slightly annoyed. Allah alone knows why. We did not keep him more than two hours and a quarter sitting in the street and office and there is plenty of time in the world.

"Anyhow, I am not sorry I annoyed him, for the scoundrel knew so much more about our own town than I did that he must have been a spy, as well as a rogue.

"Furthermore, he is undoubtedly an associate of criminals, for while he was here I had in my office a Dalmatian deserter with a chain upon his ankles (welded there through his covetousness of other people's chickens) whom he addressed with great vivacity in German.

"Our prisoner afterwards informed me that this Ingleez told how once this town was called Philomelium; that outside it was fought the battle of Ipsis, in which an infidel (on whom be curses) named Lysimachus licked another of the breed called Antigonus.

"Also, he said that a politician called Cicero once stayed here. I wish he would come again. The Ghazi would reward me for catching him and he would be hanged, as he would assuredly belong to the opposition. No politician but a fugitive would come thus far afield. The local graft is too small.

"Nevertheless, I do not believe the story, as no one of the name of Cicero has been here since I was born and that was thirty years ago, before the revolution, when it was even more unpopular to be in politics than it is now.

"There was another story, equally absurd, which our visitor told the Dalmatian about our great fellow-citizen Hodja Nasr-ed-din, who is buried here. I know that he was a very reverend priest, for our books say so. Ellis Effendi says he was court jester to the great Tamerlane, who conquered the earth.

"He says that while Tamerlane was visiting us, somebody gave him the first mirror he ever owned, and when

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he saw his ugly face he began to weep. All his courtiers tried to comfort him with flattery and had nearly calmed him when he noticed Hodja Nasr crying like a waterspout.

" 'What are *you* howling about, fellow?' says Tamerlane testily, for he liked to have a monopoly of the more dolorous emotions.

" 'Haven't I a right to weep?' sobs his jester. 'Why, when you get one glimpse of your phiz you snivel for two hours. That's right, isn't it? Well, what the devil do you think it is like for me having to sit in front of the damn thing all day and every day? Isn't it about time I gave way to my feelings?'

"The Dalmatian thought it funny. I am glad these strangers have departed."

2

All the time we gradually climbed and it became so cold that Francis rolled himself in half a dozen blankets in the back of the car and went sound asleep, while Knowles and I shivered in front with an arctic wind blowing on our cheeks from the high crests of the Sultan Dagh.

Villages were rarer and, when we met them, were filled with half-frozen dogs and huddled Turks, gathered round their doors under the lee of their houses. Every village had its graveyard more populated than itself, and a square khan or rest house with high, blind walls, unpierced except for loopholes, in which travelling caravans were wont to bivouac each evening.

The road underneath was a bleak slough. The valley was treeless in the main with rare hut shelters for wayfarers, and the further the afternoon went the more the population dwindled until it was reduced to an occasional queer shepherd, completely enveloped in a great hide coat with the hair on the inside, idling with close-grouped goats or sheep. Once in a while a floundering, growling

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camel, with a walking driver muffled to the eyes, passed us; now, an unfortunate donkey beneath a swaying human mountain.

We gazed at each other, we and all these strange passers-by, with the gravity of the half-East. When they saw that I had holy beads, and was therefore respectable, hand went to forehead:

"Salaam alikeum" . . . "Wa alikeum es salaam" ("Peace be with you" and "With you be peace") and then passed onwards.

Towards dusk it became obvious that there was something wrong with our course. Maps are unreliable appliances in Middle East. In 1860, say, somebody makes one and, behold, he finds in his references a red line which means a road. So he puts it in, little knowing that some one else before him has copied it from a former chart showing the progress of Xenophon's Ten Thousand or of the Hittite Royal Road.

By 1927 the imaginings of that map-maker and his successors have turned that track into a visionary broad highway. At least, that is how it seems to the stranger to be done. Time and again we found ourselves off the modern main roads which were unmarked upon the map, and apparently running into ravines which had been worn by ancient traffic and long since abandoned.

Here we were making toward the mountains, whereas our maps gave us an entirely different direction. I was not pleased with that prospect, for the range seemed one of the dreariest and most unpleasing we had seen and the snow came low down on its shoulders.

The steering grew complicated when, just as night began to fall, the road divided into innumerable paths all exactly alike. Quick action being called for, I selected one which bore directly for Konia and determined to keep our head pointed for that city at the end of every mile until either a mountain range or the town itself stopped us.

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3

This plan took us straight into the ranges and the dark. It was an inky dark with a spray of snow sometimes pushing into our faces in the wind. It became difficult to retain our main direction or even to keep on the road round the spurs which we began to ascend. The stars came out, and then went in as suddenly, as if some one had drawn a curtain over them. The only land or sky marks were the white peaks above. I felt our way along anxiously, stopping every little while to make sure of the track ahead in the impalpable mist which swallowed our lights at the lamp face, watching meanwhile for a village which was marked on the map and which I was seeking, as a lead from which to make our course after a certain number of miles of running.

That it was on the map did not necessarily mean it would be there in reality, for Turkish villages are the most ephemeral of communities. They usually consist of a few flat-roofed streets of huts with *pisé* walls round half the houses, some scented trees and, at night, all the dogs and donkeys in the world. And, when they get dirty, or disease decimates the inhabitants, or the Greeks arrive or the water fails in summer or the executioners swoop down, the whole place may be piled about its owners' ears or moved five miles across the plain according to circumstances.

We came within the expected range of the hamlet and there was not a sound—not a dog or a donkey giving tongue—and just as I had made up my mind that either it was not there or that we were off the road we saw a slender sword of yellow light beside us and, in the gloom, the geometrical forms of the houses.

"Hey, brothers! Peace be with you!"

The crack of a door opened cautiously revealing a segment of a bearded face.

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"With you be peace, travellers! Will you rest with us—a little coffee—a little ekmek—will you share it?"'

"Thanks be to Allah, friend, but we must go to Konia. It is ordered. Can you tell us where it lies?"

"Doghru! Doghru! (Straight on!) It is very cold and dark and the sleet will soon come."

"Thanks to the All Merciful, but we must go!"

"Pek-aiyee. (Very good.) A propitious journey and Allah be with you. Straight on, brothers!"

"Will you have a cigarette?"

We saw the grave figure in the doorway, as dignified as some great lord for all his humble setting, make the sign which means: "My head thinks well of you, my mouth speaks well of you, my heart is warm towards you."

The engine started with a bellow. The door closed, setting up once more the drawn sword of gold which stood in the crack between it and its wall.

"Doghru!"—Straight on seemed to be a wall of velvet. A sleepy dog woke and howled above an urgent twittering of women and the sound of a restless beast of burden moving behind a wall.

In a brief second, it seemed as if the whole shadowy town had been wiped out of our lives with a black duster. We were alone again with the peaks and the wind.

There was no traffic and no life. More eerie still, no trees about us, and seemingly little or no grass under wheel. The wind, where it does not set the trees gossiping and the grass hissing, is a terrible sound when you hear it in loneliness and darkness, and it is not good for man to be alone with it.

We felt our way and soon, to our relief, we began to descend a pass. Now, watercourses intersected our path and every half-mile I had to leave the car and find a way across small rivers whose banks dropped sheer, a foot or so, and were bottomed with soft mud and untrustworthy sand. Had there been enough wood to make a fire and give the party a hot drink I should have camped, but

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there was not and there was no other course but to proceed.

At last, we were out of the mountains and in the very far distance the faintest tinge of glare lit the horizon. It was too bright for timber lume, that strange, scarcely existent phosphorescence which you see on the plains at night in some warm countries when there is a belt of trees ahead. Beside, it was too much to believe that there were trees in that well-grubbed land.

"Ah," said Francis, driving skilfully among the ruts of a well-churned-up track, "I knew we were going in the wrong general direction. That's the tail of the sunset. We're going west."

"No, that's almost due east," said I, the navigator, who had been closely watching my compass.

At that moment, without warning, the glimmer became a long row of electric lamps. You could have sworn that they were right under your nose, and only the fact that they completely met each horizon advertised that they were suffering distortion from a sort of night mirage.

They began, forthwith, to play with us, the game the lapwing plays when he is luring you from his nest. They appeared to be limping just before us, we fast catching them. They dashed away until they were twinkling points in the never-never of the world's end. They wheeled and danced as we crossed gullies and nullahs by twisting paths.

When we had travelled eight miles towards them they seemed further off than when they had first sat up to look at us; though the nature of the road, which had become a broad highway, stone paved and reduced to the most terrible condition of unrepaired roughness by centuries of rain, snow, bullock wains, army waggons, lorries and marching armies, suggested the city's nearness.

The language of Francis as he drove us along this highway was terrible. He cursed the car and the English who made it and Turkey and the Turks and the road

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and the weakness of mind which had brought him to join a party which expected him to visit lands where a man had to travel after dark because there was no wood to make a fire.

While he was thus entertaining us, Konia opened its mouth for us in a manner which completely took us by surprise.

At one moment we were in the open road with a flat sea of multiplying lights in front. The next we were between mud walls with a hum of conversation about us, in cobbled streets, among donkeys, Fords and arabas or carriages drawn by neat white pairs of ponies.

A splendid Colonel, in grey and scarlet and with a very museum of lethal weapons about him, bowed to us from the pavement.

Who were we? Where were we going? Could he be of any help? A hotel? Yes——

A tall, smiling figure, in ordinary European clothes mitigated by slippers with turned-up toes, behind him in the gathering knot of onlookers, said:

"Effendim, I know a very good hotel."

Said the Colonel cynically:

"He knows a very good hotel. Good evening! Bon voyage! The gentleman will take you to his good hotel."

He clicked his spur-clad heels and went away, chuckling. We wondered what he found to amuse him. Our guide found nothing amusing. His courtesy was perfect. He sat on my knee with restraint and remarked that he would take us to a very conveniently situated hotel.

In a few minutes we had reached it.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE CITY OF THE GALATIANS

I

IT was, indeed, a very conveniently situated hotel. It faced a noisy square full of taxi cabs, a few yards from the bazaar. It had a large, dirty public room well sealed against the cold, and warmed by three oil stoves. This saloon was quick with unwashed and drunken men who were being turned into live tobacco—cured bacon in the smoke of their own cigarettes and hubble-bubbles. They were mostly playing cards at the top of their voices and, mingled with the odours of tobacco and douziko, which is a raw raisin spirit, was the sweet and cloying fragrance of Turkish coffee, the stench of dogs and unlaundered clothes, of kerosene and of that insect which no Mid-Victorian lady would mention except by the name of an illustrious ducal family.

At the far end, a thin man was washing cabbage and some other greens in a tin pan. A large cat sat on the table beside him and, as he finished each batch of greens, he put them beside the cat, a hoary, mangled Tom who looked as if he had recently been in the hands of Messieur Gene Tunney of America. The washing process seemed to remove everything from the greens except that species of grey wood bug which in Australia, at any rate, one finds in hordes under stones and vagrant pieces of wood. These the washer did not trouble to dispel. He left that to Thomas, who hooked them, half drowned, from their newly laved homes, with a mangy paw.

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"This cheleybi," said my friend the guide, "wishes a room, himself and his two servants"—thus did he ignominiously dismiss my fellow-travellers, in order to flatter me.

It was then that the cabbage washer grinned. His mouth had been closed before. He quite suddenly opened it, dived a hand among the salads and retrieved a full set of false teeth, dexterously inserted them in his maw and, in the same oral movement, said in a squeaky voice:

"Effendim, peace be with you! You shall have a splendid room."

"With every convenience?" muttered the guide.

"With every convenience, sir," squeaked the cabbage man. He took a smoking lantern and went before me out of the sweating heat of the saloon into a long gallery above an inner courtyard. Here were many rooms. Rooms, with closed doors through which soft Turkish words drifted in a silvern stream; rooms with open doors from which the cigarette smoke poured in a cloud, and through whose portals you had a brief lantern glimpse of whole families huddled about a hookah or a bowl, upon a bright-coloured rug. You sensed the sheen of brass coffee mills. You heard the clank of swords, and in one apartment, sealed tight, a lady was very evidently receiving the stick from an outraged husband without in the least disconcerting the other hotel patrons.

I was enthralled and envious at this open display of Turkish marital rights when we reached our own "convenient" apartment.

Dirt—never had there been dirt like it! There were two single beds with ragged sheets, crumpled back, upon which some strong and intoxicated ruffians had slept aforetime, leaving behind them their odour and their hoofmarks. There were seven separate colonies of cockroaches monstrous in their effluvia and tantalizing in their insolent self-possession, marching with a slow, Roman

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gait up walls which were marked by the dribble of last week's rains. A rat, a sleek, fat, scurvy fellow, escaped in the most leisurely fashion into a hole under one of the beds and, as I leant a cautious hand on the only chair, it fell off its three legs with a resounding clamour.

"See," said the cabbage man, "it is most convenient. There is a basin for water and behold the cistern!"

The basin was of cracked enamel and the cistern was a kerosene tin on the balcony.

"The latrine," said mine host, as if clinching the matter, "is next door."

"And the winter garden," muttered I, his poor victim, who had already apprehended the nearness of the sanitary arrangements, "is doubtless below."

There was nothing to do but take it. For one thing it was late and dark and we were tired to the bone. For another, I had already guessed what I would not for the world have confided to the party since Francis had developed a touch of fever and was in a mood of anger, namely, that our guide was a plain-clothes policeman. Wherefore, I had my doubts whether, if we chose to go out and sleep in the sweet, cold air beyond the town, we should be allowed to do so.

This painful suspicion was confirmed a little later when he assured me that the car would be perfectly safe in the courtyard and adjured every one within hearing on the pain of fearful consequences to see that nothing was stolen.

2

"And now to eat!" said I to him.

"Ah, yes," said he. "There is nothing here, but I will take you to a nice restaurant."

We went to the nice restaurant. It was in a side street, ten feet wide. Next door to it a gentleman was being shaved by candlelight by a large, bald barber who held him by the nose and flourished an enormous razor

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over his face in the manner of barbers the world over. The performance was made hideous by the macabre shadows which it cast.

In the restaurant, everybody got up when we entered, except the cockroaches and a small boy in an apron. The proprietor hustled in.

"It is a nice restaurant," whispered our Shadow. "What would the gentlemen eat?"

"There isn't anything fit for a man to eat in these blooming countries," muttered Francis.

"Tell him a porterhouse with chips and a pint of Worthington, old man," murmured Knowles wistfully.

"Bring me a chicken, some pilau, kebab (roast meat), cheese and some figs," said I, thinking hard of likely comestibles.

"Alas, effendim, there are none of these. It is Ramadan and the people have eaten them all."

"Well, what is there? We are hungry."

"Sir, there is only et" (meat).

He went off to get it.

"It is very good et," whispered our police Shadow, while we sat back thinking of joints.

After some time it came. It consisted of two very diminutive lamb chops swimming in an ocean of lightish, green water.

"How good!" whispered our guide, hoarse with admiration. "Pek ala! (It is beautiful.) So young, too!"

It was, indeed. I wondered whether the poor animal had even been allowed to be born before they chopped it up.

"Come on, lads!" I cried hoarse with hunger, and five minutes afterwards three mud-bespattered, weary-eyed, disreputable persons might have been descried sitting on a green valise in the dirtiest room in the world, eating bully beef with the aid of jack-knives, while seven rows of cockroaches and a number of envious rats watched them furtively.

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Outside, cross-kneed on the floor, a very funnel of cigarette smoke, squatted our Shadow, fully content in that he had introduced to us one of his brethren who had taken away our passports. A cup of coffee sat between his crossed knees.

"A very convenient hotel," he muttered as Francis went into the land of dreams with a sated groan, "a very convenient hotel!"

He rose and left us after he had put his cigarette butt, with infinite care, into our washing water. The cockroaches on the wall dissolved into sleepy mist. A Turkish gramophone wailing, two or three rooms away, some horrid Arab air, became faint.

Once, years afterwards, a voice down a world-long funnel cried, hectoringly: "Beni dinle!" (Listen to me), to be answered by a still more urgent cry—"Chabek gel!" (Come quickly!), more than once repeated by a terrified feminine voice. There were sounds of a scuffle somewhere in another world. "He came—Listen to me—what for? nichin—nee—ichin—Listen to me . . ."

A dog howled. The Iconian cocks crowed and I woke drowsily to the greyness of morning with the thought: "Now, this is Konia that once was Iconium. Xenophon was here, and Paul preaching to the 'foolish Galatians' and telling them of how he went into Jerusalem and remained there fifteen days with Peter.

"And we are here and coming, have passed by ancient Didymus and Doryleum, Metropolis and Minor Antioch, all now no more. The Galatians have gone or been overbred. And the tracks of Greek and Persian, Arab and Hun are covered by the German-built railway, so that possibly the only things left unchanged are the sunrise and the snow on the hills and human nature and the cockcrow which has been breaking the mist, day in and day out, come Greek or Ottoman or Crusader or exiled Armenian on the tramp, since the days of the Phrygians and before.

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"These very roosters," said I to myself sleepily, "must be descendants of the ones who would have awakened Paul and Barnabas when they were here, making them think of Peter and another crowing. Here they are, the thousandth great-grandchildren of those birds which disturbed an apostle who possibly heard Peter's private Chanticleer, calmly perpetuating their race as ever and waking the days, regardless of the 'envyings, murders, drunkenness and revellings and suchlike,' which moved Paul to wrath in this very spot nineteen hundred years ago and which, by last night's experience, have been going on ever since with steadily improving technique.

"It is a pity, though," said I to myself as a pallid dawn revealed the diligent insect life of the chamber still marching, and the remains of one of my boots which the rats had obligingly left me,—" It is a pity that they have not learned to eat vermin in all the time they have been here. Anybody can crow!"

Whereupon, I rose and took a good dose of sulphate of quinine and two laxo-bromo tabloids as well, which is the right thing to do when you have malaria in your system and you wake soliloquizing about futile things.

3

A few minutes afterwards, our Shadow came.

"Good morning," said he. "How long will you stay in Konia—how many weeks?"

"We leave," said I with involuntary distinctness, for I subconsciously felt it necessary to breast the treacly stench of Turk and cockroach and cigarette and douziko with my words, "as early this morning as we can get away. So soon as we have bought stores."

"There is a very cheap store," the Shadow murmured, the light of baksheesh coming into his eyes. "All the German gentlemen buy from it."

The others woke sleepily and Knowles said:

"Now to breakfast!" like a man who has had a good

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night's rest. But there was no breakfast. Every living thing in Konia, contrary to our experience in other Turkish towns further north, had observed Ramadan and had eaten at drum beat and when we rose at six o'clock they were all about their business. Even the rats had breakfasted, as we discovered on looking at our kit.

Outside, it was a lovely, clear morning, resonant with the clang of much metal working. Off the Central Square, the bazaars were busy, each narrow alley with its own trade. Here the copper and brass workers, cross-legged, blew their little forges and beat upon the metal with their lazy, musical hammers. Here one heard the harmonious cries of the vegetable and sweet sellers. Next door, row upon row, between strings of finished footwear clopping in the wind, were the bowed gnomes of the cobblers' street. Then you suddenly came upon the raisin and grocery merchants and an exciting space full of tired ponies sleeping, with lower lip extended, under loads of faggots hacked from the gnarled mountain timber, or rising with angry grunts and squeals as new-comers jostled them for a place in the firewood market.

Across the square, a broad, open Maidan, lay modern Turkey—a rabbit-warren of a Civil Office where a bald policeman, whose ancestors had certainly heard of Jerusalem, judging by his contours, quickly visaed our passports and bowed me out down a long passage, while our Shadow told me all about the Bank which I was about to visit.

A grand Bank, he said; one of the best banks in Turkey, and it opened at nine o'clock. At nine I went to it. A large gendarme sat on the front steps armed with a rifle and a bayonet. True to the most villainous traditions of the Orient, he was picking his teeth with a pocket-knife, and he followed disconcertingly close on my heels as I went in.

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There were several clerks behind the counters and a washerwoman in baggy trousers smoking a cigarette and sweeping as if time were no object. The most gorgeous of the clerks, who wore the sidelevers of Rudolph Valentino and a heather purple suit of Parisian cut, gazed at me for a moment or two and then, to indicate that I was not an object of real interest to him, yawned behind a lily hand and expectorated deftly across the room.

"The Bank," he said, "is not open."

"What time will it open?"

"At nine o'clock."

"It is a quarter past."

"Then it will open at half-past."

He took a pink coral comb from his waistcoat pocket and delicately adjusted his side whiskers and when he had quite finished announced:

"You must go out and come back at half-past nine."

I went out. The soldier came with me and the sun laid the image of his bayonet ominously across my path.

At half-past nine I returned.

"I wish to exchange some English money," I said to the sidelevers.

"You do?" said he, making sure that his hair was straight before he approached another young man, equally Hollywoodian in manner and attire. They had a confab.

Rudolph Valentino II—there was no doubt but that the Original's films had been showing in Konia—came forward. He took one of my good English Bradburys contemptuously by the corner and said, in German:

"What is this thing?"

"That is a British pound note."

"Whose picture is upon it?"

"King George of England."

He gazed at the Royal beard as much as to say: "That kind went out of fashion in the nineties."

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"We do not buy these things," said Rudolph, scornfully casting the note on the counter. "Perhaps they would take them in the bazaar."

He returned to his toilet, having discovered a speck of dust in one of his nails and when I (and the soldier) had nearly reached the door, he drawled:

"The Bank will not buy them, but I will give you eight lira for them myself—as a favour."

At the bazaar, in the street of the jewellers, where most of the jewellery consisted of strings of Turkish gold lira and Austrian gold crowns linked together, I sold my pounds.

The purchaser offered me nine lira for them and I said that I wanted seventy piastres more. Then the merchant swore by the Prophet that he could not afford a cent above his price, and I left his stall in such a state of indignation that I collided with a camel. As I was about to enter another stall, the owner of the one I had just left came running and asked me to return and have coffee with him. I returned. We took each other's measure over the coffee, after which he opined that, as I seemed to be a poor man and a great traveller and he was of a weakly generous nature, he felt that, out of charity, he must allow me another ten piastres.

In the subsequent proceedings, he showed a dramatic talent worthy of Mr. Oscar Asche. He raged. He wept. He took one of my notes and, waving it in the face of an astonished passer-by, demanded of him whether it was not robbery to ask so much as I required for so small a piece of dirty paper. He pounded his table till all the necklaces hanging in his little window jingled protestingly. But, whenever I attempted to leave, he whispered, clutching my sleeve:

"Just one second, effendim, one second only. Let me tell you——"

Then he pounded on the table some more and told me—how he had a large family and a mother and father

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and a grandmother and a grandfather to keep and a son whose donkeys had died and a daughter who had had influenza. It was a great fight—the world's wrestling championship was a mere circumstance beside it. And at last, working to that desirable result piastre by piastre, we compromised on the legal exchange less ten per cent commission.

The Shadow was sitting on the footpath outside and I fancied I saw two lean talons touch as we went away. Certainly, the Shadow put something into his pocket.

4

The party was loaded down with tinned delicacies which they had bought at the local store and most of the tiny European colony, mainly Germans, were waiting to see us off. Francis was in his element because there was one young Teuton who had been in Australia and to him Francis could tell, in his native language, wild tales of Arnheim Land.

The storekeeper was also waiting for us. He was a modern storekeeper and he was armed with the bill. When I had taken a long drink of water and wiped the chilly perspiration from my brow, I paid it. Among other things, the genius of Knowles had secured a bottle of real whisky, the price of which, alas, was thirty shillings!

We left Konia as quickly as we could. As we went, I thought I saw the Shadow taking something from the storekeeper; but, when I turned round to make sure, he was walking hastily toward the emporium from which we had earlier in the morning purchased petrol. There was a look of pleasant determination on his optimistic countenance and the toes of his Oriental slippers seemed to curl with sheer satisfaction.

Later, I discovered that Konia had one of the most modern hotels in Asia Minor, conducted on the European

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plan and boasting even such luxuries as a restaurant with real table-cloths on the tables.

I do not know why we were not taken there.

Possibly it did not pay baksheesh to Shadows.

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CHAPTER XIV

MAROONED AMONG THE ISAURIANS

I

IN the middle of an Anatolian plain on the third day of April, 1927, a demented motor-car might have been seen making drunken progress in the rain. That motor-car was ours. It had left Konia. We had seen that city fade, first, into a line of poplars, then, into a kind of mist, then, into a mere haze. We had dodged tortuous water channels which the Turks had cut to help them grow wheat. We had chosen between a medley of earth tracks and received differing information from shepherds and constables which had brought us, in the end, between narrowing mountains to Karaman and beyond and—here we were.

Firstly, as I have said, it was raining. Secondly, we had other tribulations. Our third crown wheel since approaching Constantinople had begun to give out. Stirred to action by a suspicious noise, the evening before, I had removed the differential plate and found that the head had broken off a casing bolt and that the teeth on the wheel were just beginning to go. Given no heavy pulling, it was possible that we might make Adana; but our nearest spare crown wheel was several hundred miles away at Beirut.

I determined to make the railway, a few miles from our present position, and send a man ahead to pick up this reserve part, the remainder of the party then pushing on cautiously as far as possible till we met final disaster.

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Amid the loud cursing of our Overlander, we went to sleep on that and in the morning it rained. What a place it was to meet rain! Tracks ran everywhere. Every field seemed to have a main road in it and, as all the farms had been irrigated for years, they were very wet indeed. Sometimes the car turned round and looked at us. Always she had a waltzing, prancing motion. While, since we had no mud-guards, the wheels sprayed great gouts of soil all over the outfit, alternating this moist shrapnel with an occasional cannon ball of clay which usually hit an expeditionary and burst gleefully upon his carcase. Having no windscreen—that impediment had been removed for the sake of peace in deference to Francis' loathing of driving behind glass—he and I had the full force of the deluge in the front seat and Knowles sheltered himself by covering himself over entirely with a tarpaulin. Occasionally, he advertised his presence by singing "God bless the Prince of Wales" or by a smothered fire of badinage, in the course of which he frequently pleaded that I should not allow him to drown in his cabin, but would throw him a lifebelt before we went down.

The landscape was bleak and barren. The villages were scarce and wet and miserable. The rivulets into which the irrigation channels had swelled through the rain became broader. Some flats were sheets of water. The country changed from one long expansive valley into a series of featureless basins completely surrounded by naked hills.

"Over that mountain," I said at last, "the railway line must lie. At the first station we get to, we camp."

Indeed, I would have camped then and there had I not felt that the weather was working up to a serious change. I did not desire to be caught on boggy country, out of touch with the world in a flood.

Suddenly, disaster fell upon us. The track which we were following took the wrong turning. It plunged

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into fields banked round with dykes and we began to sink.

"Stop!" I yelled to Birtles.

But I was too late. Down went our back wheels. A geyser of mud advertised that they were spinning. Knowles and I took out the tarpaulins and built a surface under them, but the moment Birtles tried to reverse, we heard the crown wheel part with some of its teeth.

As Knowles said, sitting on a dyke regardless of the rain and mud—that was that.

2

The horizon was about as cheerless as it could be. A hundred yards away were some wretched goat folds separated from what seemed to be shepherds' huts by mud and rain. South-eastward, through a misty drizzle, lay a line of poplars and beyond that another bare range, and beyond that again, very far away, the snowcaps of the Taurus.

"This is the end of things," said Birtles. "I give up. I'm walking home."

I almost felt like that myself, but hot coffee cheered us all up and I started out to explore the distant poplars, the hall-mark of a large village.

I have been in a number of obstacle races, but the slit bag, the apple in the tub, the in-and-out hurdle are child's play compared to a Turkish paddy-field in heavy rain. Each field covers, perhaps, half an acre and is walled in with mud dykes, and is of any shape that the maker feels to be convenient to the lie of the land.

First of all, I tried to walk on the top of the slippery dykes. But this procedure, when one was aiming for a definite point in the landscape, was a little like chasing the minotaur in his labyrinth. Also, I very often fell off a dyke quite suddenly with a loud splash. After I had made a quarter of a mile, I seemed to be further away from the poplars than before, so I took a straight line

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across the fields, regardless of what difficulties might be in the way.

This was backbreaking work because the mud was almost all the way ankle-deep, and for much of the way it was knee-deep. Every hundred yards I was compelled to rest and I gradually reduced my progress to a formula—a hundred yards wading, two minutes' rest in the driving sleet which replaced the rain.

By the time I reached the outskirts of the village, I was drenched to the skin through my leather coat and flying cap, mud from head to foot, and my teeth were chattering with cold. In the village not a living thing was in sight except a weary and bedraggled chicken, sheltering under the eaves of one of the flat-roofed huts and, under the lee of a hill-side, the placid donkeys feeding on Heaven alone knows what, regardless of the elements.

I halloed, and the answer was the sharp baying of dogs which charged down on me, snarling and aggressive. I had no weapons, not even a stick, and I was about as safe with the pack as I would have been with an equal number of wolves. More than one man, it is said, has come to a bad end at the expense of Anatolian village hounds. I retired to the cemetery.

Every Turkish village has its graveyard, which generally sports a far greater population than the village itself. In fact, it is not at all uncommon to see the evidence that graveyards have entirely absorbed the towns to which they belong. They are unlike our own in that they are unfenced, and the poverty of the people debars all but the headmen and extraordinarily wealthy townsmen from indulging in engraved headstones.

When you bury grandfather, you simply go to the hill-side, take the largest stone that you can carry, and, without hewing it or decorating it with any in memoriam notice, you stick it endways on the top of his mound. In time, the stone crumbles and as the expectation of life

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is short in Anatolia, what with cold and influenza, food shortage, wars and massacres, you yourself are probably underground too soon to make any repairs or replacements.

It is easily understood therefore why the weaponless stranger attacked by dogs immediately makes a bee-line for the local burial ground.

In this one, the ammunition was ample but the flesh was weak. Just as, exhausted by the fight, I was getting rid of my coat which I proposed to throw to the attackers to give myself a moment's respite, a man appeared from a nearby hut.

"Allah! Allah!" he said in a voice of shocked astonishment, whether at my misuse of ancestral monuments or at the behaviour of the dogs I did not know and did not care.

"Peace be with you," said I, through the stream of water which was pouring off the fur of my cap.

"And to you peace, O Brother," said the old man gently, as he drove off the dogs. "Will you enter?" As an afterthought, he added: "It is raining and you are unclean."

"You don't say so," I retorted, *sotto voce*, stripping as much mud out of my beard as was feasible.

3

He led me to his hut and it was typical of the huts of all the villages. It was of *pisé* with thick walls, whitewashed inside, plain mud outside. It had a vestibule with an earth floor in which were neatly piled tools of trade, harness and a bag or two of poor-looking wheat.

This opened through a doorway into an inner room, specklessly clean. A gaudy carpet covered its floor and two brightly coloured sleeping mats occupied the whole of one side of it. The further end was almost entirely formed by an immense fireplace with a grey-ashed charcoal fire, showing no flame. To the right, under the

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only window, was a wall cupboard containing a highly polished brass coffee mill, a bowl of coffee beans, a small jar of sugar, a wooden box of cigarettes and a flint and steel. Below these were four rug-covered cushions against the wall, and a water chattie and a coffee pot stood on the hob.

Near the door hung a sheepskin coat, over a gaudy Turkish trunk and, in a corner, a basin and a ewer, and a towel decorated at each end with a gold stripe.

These were all the man's possessions. He had no pictures, no gramophone, none of the luxuries of what we call civilization, yet his house had a simple and beautiful dignity, a symmetry, a proportion which would have charmed the heart of a true architect. And he had everything that his untutored existence called for—even the means to make a guest thoroughly at home, as he soon proved as he wrapped me in sheepskin and removed my boots and made coffee for me in his little pot.

When he had performed these offices, we looked at each other and I felt that it was time for business. I told him as well as I could of our disaster and asked for bullocks.

"Bullocks!" said he with scorn. There were no bullocks to be hired at any price. But his eyes gleamed and I knew that he had some plan, profitable to himself, in his mind.

So I demanded that he should send for the headman and the hodja or priest, one of whom, I hoped, might speak a little of some European language to replace my rudimentary Turkish. They came, in due course, bringing with them the population of the village.

The headman was a gorgeous young man in a black velvet waistcoat and a round cap, set off by trousers which bulged above the knee and strangled his calves below. He had a Mephistophelean blue-black moustache; a red handkerchief round his neck and, in his cummerbund, a knife and a pen-holder. The Hodja

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was an old gentleman in an expressive black robe with an Oriental beard which would have delighted Oscar Asche almost as much as his fascinatingly evil expression, produced by somebody having pulled out two opposing front teeth in the very centre of his mouth. The population looked like a chorus of brigands. They smelt like a stable. They behaved like a congregation of monkeys, feeling the texture of my coat and nestling up to me (O, horrid Turkish odour!) to put their ears to my wrist-watch. Also, they vied among themselves for the honour of rolling cigarettes for me with much licking of damp paper, a rite which I viewed without enthusiasm. They also, man by man, tried on my flying cap amid loud roars of laughter in which the owner was compelled to join.

When they tired of these little games, I returned to the matter of bullocks. They shook their heads. They had carriages and horses. They had donkeys without end —but manda yok!—devil a manda would they admit to. We argued it out for half an hour, and all the while I felt certain that they could oblige me if they wanted to, but that they were hoping that I would stick in the mud until all my money ran out to the profit and prosperity of the district.

At last I produced my red seals from an inner pocket, and after the priest had solemnly read the document (wrong way round as a man reads Arabic, but determined not to admit his lack of comprehension of it), he seemed to say in effect:

"This is a very important gentleman and we had better be careful. No, my lads, we can't play too many tricks here. See how much red there is about it all and hear how the paper crackles. Did you ever see anyone less than a Bey going about with a thing like this? Get busy, brothers!"

They got busy with great alacrity, while the old gentleman sat and grinned at me through the cavity in

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his teeth, occasionally venturing an hospitable inquiry, half in sign language. Outside, we could hear a great shouting and a shrieking of women, the splashing of donkeys being chased. Three-quarters of an hour went by when, warned by a great noise that every available beast of burden had been got ready, I inspected in state.

My first impression, on coming into the open air, was that the animals were being assembled again to go into the ark. If any moving picture producer is anxious to film the Deluge, I can recommend him to take that Galatian village on a wet day as a venue. The old priest needed only greasepaint to transform him into Noah. He looked the part. I gazed round instinctively for the elephants and the giraffes, but they were not there.

In their place was a long line of optimists, each yelling in invitation and every one of them attached to a domestic animal. There were donkeys, sound asleep in the downpour, and there was a yellow milch cow. An array of equines, in which I at once lacked confidence but which would have delighted the habitués of a Belgian meat market, gloomed beside two weedy little buffaloes. One bright citizen, lacking all other traction, had even brought a couple of sheep and above the shouts of: "Effendim, look!" "My lord, for two liras," a stentorian voice behind restive white ponies in an araba, kept shouting: "I will drive you, effendim—your motor-car is broken. Let it lie there!"

The harness of all this tractive medley was made of string and green hide hastily tied together, bridle reins and straps, and one enterprising contractor seemed to have knotted the family towels to eke out his appliances.

If I stopped in front of an animal, everybody crowded round me, plucking at my sleeve to lead me to another, while that part of the village which had nothing to offer stood off and gave advice to all its friends.

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Choosing the most ancient and decrepit-looking horse in the assembly, I pretended to examine him thoroughly. The village shouted with laughter. When I ran my hand along his backbone, shaking my head dolefully, they fairly rocked. When I felt his hocks and fetlocks one young man rolled in the mud in ecstasy. When I looked into his mouth, as one who has made a painful discovery, the merriment was intense. Throughout, the faithful old nag slept peacefully on.

"Only thirty-seven years old," I announced to the crowd.

Then, turning to the owner, I bowed politely, held out my hand and said: "Good-bye," at the same time pointing to the cemetery.

At this sally the village was unable to control itself, and it was interesting to notice that they had reacted and were behaving exactly as I should have expected a camp full of Australian blacks to behave in the presence of that sort of simple and insulting humour.

4

It seemed to be the right moment to catch them. I hastily ordered the two buffalo forward and then lining up a dozen youngsters and addressing a lad who was evidently the village wag, as "Bimbashi," I stepped in front of the line and gave the order "March" in a loud voice.

We marched. It appeared that there was a road which led almost to where I had come from, but by a roundabout and tortuous route. Somebody pretended to be a drum and somebody to be a trumpet. The rest shouted and howled. The manda trotted behind, and behind them again was a long string of hopeful owners of horses and donkeys and barking dogs. Even the gentleman with the two sheep did not abandon his quest for baksheesh. A more savage-looking rabble was unimaginable. It was dressed to a man in little, conical pork-pie hats with

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narrow, very much turned-up rims, rough coats that sloped from narrow shoulders and an expansive cummerbunded middle, which, in turn, topped plus four hips dwindling into narrow trousered calves, above white socks and slippers turned up at the toes.

I don't know what Birtles and Knowles thought of us as we descended on them shouting "Marshallah!" and singing some savage Turkish war song. As I was practically unrecognizable after my passage of the paddy-fields, they thought at first that I had been murdered and that it was their turn next and they were much relieved to discover the true state of affairs.

Straightway we hitched the two miserable-looking manda to the rear of the car and they made short work of their task. In no time, what with their pulling and the pushing of the population and the shouting of every one who had a voice, we were on solid ground 200 yards away.

No sooner were we safe than I sent Knowles to the village to get a horse carriage for which I had already arranged, with instructions to make the railway line and from there to somehow accomplish the journey to Beirut, where he was to secure our cached crown wheel and return as quickly as possible. Then I sat down with Francis to wait.

A wind had risen and the rain and sleet had stopped so that it seemed possible that in a few hours, if our driving gear would carry us, we might be able to make the railway line seven miles away ourselves. By far the wisest plan, however, seemed to be to delay twenty-four hours for the road to dry.

We cleaned as much mud off the car as we could and made preparations to be comfortable in this wet, treeless, cheerless region 3,500 feet above sea-level, but without wood to make a fire it was not a pleasant prospect, more especially since, when I attempted to appropriate a hut to shelter us, the local shepherds came up snarling with

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anger to warn us that this accommodation was reserved for their goats. Nothing would induce them to yield to us. The goats left in the open, they said, would perish, since to-night and to-morrow it was going to snow.

Well, said I to them, if the goats would die, so should we, but they merely shrugged their shoulders as if they thought this unimportant.

5

Meanwhile, my bodyguard of villagers had not left us. They were becoming a nuisance. Every one of them presented a bill, but when I refused to pay most of them, they were quite cheerful about it. They stood about and examined our goods and looked through our field-glasses and one or two of them, affected with absent-mindedness, started for a long walk with a blanket or a spanner or anything else that happened to be at hand.

When their luncheon hour arrived, I felt they would go home, but instead of that they all put their hands in their capacious trouser pockets and produced rolls of bread. It was as pliable as paper and it was called Youvhah. Later experience proved that it made a most substantial meal, and the manner in which it could be folded made it most convenient to carry.

Half-way through the afternoon one of the villagers found a pretext to take me aside and say:

"Don't sleep here! Bad people!" He put his arms up as if he were shooting somebody and then dug me playfully over the heart with a finger and said: "Bang! Dead!"

I had already begun to feel uneasy, and Francis had long ago added our helpers to the thousands of robbers and murderers whom he had already classified since we left London. As they became more and more cheeky, I determined to make the railway, and was helped to this decision by the prophecy of snow.

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Francis was firmly against risking the journey with the broken crown wheel, but our visitors grew so impudent in their ransacking of the car that the attempt at last became inevitable. We packed hurriedly and Francis took the wheel. I invited the friendly villager who had advised us, to ride home with us, and immediately our wheels began to turn, at least a dozen others leapt into the car, clinging to the sides and the footboards. We stopped and I ordered them all off; but when we began to move again they resumed their old perches and were joined by a large number of their friends.

They hung on like flies, and eventually we were compelled to push them off with violence, as the car in its limping state could not carry the extra load. There was more than a little anger in their going, for Francis on his side had not been gentle and I had threatened one fellow with a spanner. As we left them straggling and sprawling on the wet road, they picked themselves up with threats, menaces, pleadings and objurgations and started to run after us. Then some of them began to take a short cut across the fields, while our crown wheel lost another tooth, causing us to make a noise like a sledge-hammer.

It was an ugly business for a minute or two, till we found out that the mud in those fields which our pursuers were crossing was almost as bad as in the ones which I had negotiated during the morning.

Ahead lay the village and beyond that a mountain.

"Over that mountain, out of sight of the village," I said to Francis, "or else we're in for fun."

One of the wildest drives I have ever had began. It was now necessary to keep up the speed of the car to fifteen miles an hour, to bridge the neutral zone which the lost teeth had made in the wheel, and every time the pinion reached this point it struck a sledge-hammer blow so that we did not know at what minute more teeth would strip and leave us stranded. Furthermore, at the top of

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the hill was a narrow defile, winding like a snake and just wide enough for a waggon. We could not see twenty feet ahead of us most of the time, and as we did not know whether, just round the bend, the cutting might not become too narrow for us, seeing that we had only inches to play with, in any case, or whether we might not meet a sleeping team of donkeys or a snorting camel team or a couple of horses in a carriage, demented by our approach, our passage of the defile was quite a sporting venture.

We were barely through it and safely out of sight of the indignant inhabitants in the rear when we came upon Knowles.

We were astonished and so was he. He had been sitting in his carriage like a lord when we emerged from over the hill, but he got out of it more quickly than I have ever before or since seen a man alight. Then the two horses tied themselves in knots and the driver tied himself in a knot and when we had got ourselves on to a downhill slope, we stopped and I went back and asked Knowles to keep behind us all the way in case we came to a bad end. He said that that was exactly what both he and the owner of the carriage and their two steeds intended to do. He declared, in fact, that they would not attempt to pass us for a thousand pounds and that the only fear of the driver, who had never before seen a motor-car, was that we would turn round and chase him.

After a quarter of an hour we lost another tooth with a rasping shriek. Darkness was fast coming down. The white peaks of the hills ahead were becoming shadowy along the skyline, when we saw, with a sigh of relief, a picture which took us back two thousand miles. On a wide, wide plain stood a red-roofed, German railway station. There was no doubt about it. It was just such a group as the Teuton builds the world over —everything symmetrical and new-looking with houses

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mathematically spaced and geometrically painted. We sighed with relief.

In a few minutes we swooped down upon the much-astonished officials. The station was Airange Derbend. The station-master was an Arab named Mudir Bey, who had served at Haifa in the "British time." The day was a festival—the end of Ramadan. The douziko was very strong and had been flowing freely. We were received with a warmth which seemed rather drowsy, and when they had drunk all our whisky they offered us the shelter of the waiting-room which had a good stone floor to sleep on.

Knowles, it appeared, had spent his day driving a bargain with the village, which had refused to allow him to leave. He had made a remarkably good bargain of seven liras for his ride, but as I had bargained in the morning and paid the driver's fee of two liras (having a little Turkish which poor Knowles had not) we were all hilarious about it and, letting the station staff and two wheat-buyers into the joke, succeeded in borrowing twenty liras from them to carry our emissary to Adana. This was a very necessary precaution, as our difficulties of exchange and the day's heavy haulage fees had left me with only sterling, and I felt something of a strategist in accomplishing the loan while the day was yet merry and morning had not brought discretion following the night's rejoicing.

It was nearly ten o'clock before I could peel off my clothes, still damp from the morning's rain, and roll in blankets to sleep.

"Well," I muttered, "we've earned our rest to-night."

Two loud snores answered me.

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CHAPTER XV

THE WORLD OF AIRANGE DERBEND

I

THE morning revealed Airange Station in its full simplicity. Its inventory totalled one boiler-house, some outhouses, the railway station, an open shed with a pile of wheat in the middle of it, a tree-planted platform equipped with a pump and a well, a cottage across the way in the garden of which grew one tall and graceful poplar. Behind that lay a bare plain scored with irrigation channels from a stream that ran along the foothills to the north-east of the valley; then a flat-roofed village embowered in trees, Airange Osman, post-office centre and metropolis of the valley; finally the Taurus, distant, white-capped, ever changing with the sweep of the mists.

There were two other distant villages on the shoulders of the hills on the northern side of the railway, both wretched and poverty-stricken and inhabited largely by hordes of goats; while, by the swift, narrow snow stream which sneaked along the base of the hills, piled debris and deserted graveyard, abandoned well and toppling tombstone told that at one time the valley had sheltered no less than nine townlets. One of them must have been large, judging by the elaborateness of its burial ground and the lovely arched stone bridge which crossed the stream near its site among the few willow saplings which composed the whole vegetation of the district apart from the fruit trees and poplars of Airange Station and the villages.

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I came to know all these features by heart before I had finished with them, for, thanks to the leisureliness of old England's methods, there was plenty of time to observe them thoroughly and to become acquainted with the population, which showed every disposition to know us as well as it was allowed.

The station-master occupied the top story of the two-floored station house with his family. He wore a gorgeous blue uniform designed with a German naval uniform as a basis. It had gold wherever there was room to hang gold upon it. He was, as I have said before, an Arab. His wife came from Homs in Syria. His children were legion, but young, and one wondered how he acquired them in the time at his disposal. He pointed out proudly and frequently that they had been born all over the East from Plovdev to Haifa and, though his wage was such that an Australian rag and bone man would scorn it, he was proud and certain that the stork had not finished with him.

"One more the month after next," he said confidently. "And then some more presently."

Whereupon, smiling his dark and winning smile, for he was one of the most handsome and attractive scoundrels I have ever seen and the only Arab of my experience who in personal appearance approached the ideal of beauty for which the tribes are famous in Hollywood and E. M. Hull, he put his right arm lovingly round my shoulder and his left hand into the side pocket of the car, from which he skilfully extracted a pocket-knife, a pair of pincers and half a cake of chocolate.

When I called upon him, in his office, ten minutes later, and politely asked for their return, he smiled his utterly disarming smile and said brightly:

"Ah, I borrow them to show them to Madame!" and handed them back with a bow.

"Chok fena, boo adam!" (Very bad, that man!) said the Hodja of the village and all his admiring friends.

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"He steal your whisky" (that is any liquid which looked as if it might be good to drink, from spirits of salts to iodine). "I see him with he do it. It make him sick."

Usually, about two days afterwards, Mudir Bey would arrive with your own bottle and ask you to fill it with benzine, and when you asked him where he got it, he would say:

"Ah, Mr. Fisher at Haifa, he give me that—in the war."

Then Francis under the car would probably say: "May the hellfire of Providence smite the blank, blank, blank, blank," etc., and a look of admiration would come over our guest's countenance as he exclaimed ecstatically:

"Ah, Meester Young at Haifa, he say that."

When he had gone you would miss two forks and a pound of dates.

I noticed that all the village kept its wives well away from him in spite of his evident busyness as a populator in his own circle—all except the poor railway officials, who were not able to, since they lived grouped about him. For whenever any of these latter made a journey, as one or another of them did almost daily, his return was marked by a series of epic events which began with a Trojan war between himself and the station-master; spread to include the Helen of the moment and ended in a meeting between Mudir and his wife in which his wife did the talking in a high, piercing voice of protest and her lord and master, no doubt smiling a sweet Valentino smile all the time, expressed himself feelingly with a stick.

Beneath his top-floor flat lived the apprentice porter or clerk, in a bare room furnished with a stretcher, a primus stove, two passport photographs, a tin of kerosene, one benzine case, and two visiting wheat-buyers who shared the floor and complained bitterly of their next-door neighbours, the head porter and his family. The latter had also one room in which he housed him-

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self, who was about six feet high, a wife, five children, two dogs and a vagrant shepherd boy. They were all noisy and cheerful and Mrs. Porter never got a beating, possibly because her husband, who was a great, good-natured chunk of a fellow, did the whole of the work of the station from sweeping the floors to digging the garden and putting on a gorgeous uniform to walk bandily down the line for half a mile and flag in the trains with great ceremony. Thus, he had no time for indoor sport. He and the engineer, a sandy widower with two fine boys, were the only people on Airange Station who could be trusted not to steal, and the head porter was the only man who appeared to need credit when the monthly stores train came in.

Last but not least among our new neighbours was the chief wheat-buyer. He was the one Turk in Turkey who looked like the Turk of tradition. He wore baggy clothes and a beard. He regarded us perpetually with suspicion. If there was a crowd about the car, he would sidle furtively up with a shoe to be mended or a benzine tin to be cut in halves. If you were polite and did as he asked, he shook his head as much as to say: "There is something wrong about all this. Why should these fellows do this for nothing?" While if you repulsed him he went off muttering rude remarks about the lack of courtesy in foreigners.

I did not, however, plumb the full depths of his meanness until I caught him stealing bread from our adopted dog, a lady Seluki who was all ribs because, though she would have been worth twenty pounds in England, she was so unregarded in Galatia that she had to subsist on a diet of hurled stones.

The old gentleman said that the curse of God should rest on people who wasted good bread, and when I told him that it not only should but did rest on thieves, he went off muttering vengeance. As for Ekmek Annie, the dog, she repaid our defence of her by that night

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sneaking up behind Francis and suddenly stealing a hard-boiled egg out of his hand. The next time I saw her she was just reaching the ground after a journey off Birtles' boot, and for several nights thereafter I had a quaint fancy that there was a dint in the Milky Way.

2

The morning after we arrived, the Aleppo mail passed through from Haidar Pasha and the last passenger we saw hanging from its windows was a neat military person with an outrageous beard whose name was Knowles. He was off to Beirut via Adana. He was to stop at Adana and send a cable to England asking that a crown wheel be sent urgently to Constantinople and he was to pick up the crown wheels and pinions, supposed to be awaiting us at Beirut, and bring them back with all speed.

That day was April 4th. We said cheerfully: "See you in five days. Bring some bully beef back with you as we have less than a week's rations." Then we settled down to fill in the four or five days with overhaul and we had barely begun when the first sightseer arrived.

He was a large Anatolian in the usual costume, very small about the head, very expansive about the cummerbund, very curly about the toes of his slippers.

He gave me a civil "Salaam," and then, putting his hands behind his back, walked solemnly round the car. In twenty minutes a whole delegation were doing the same thing. And by the evening I had become hardened against the constant cynosure of eyes while they had driven Francis nearly mad, and, in later days, so affected him that he would go raging out on to the plain calling upon Providence to smite them. It was a curious psychological experiment and I did not blame him. Francis usually has a boyish delight in Australian crowds —he is never so happy as in a city street with half the population round him hailing him as "explorer." The dirtier the car and the more corroboration there is in

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his own appearance of hardship endured, the better he likes it.

But these were different crowds. They would begin, always with the one man, as on the first morning. He would drive up with his araba and his two white horses, splendid lightweights, beautifully paired and of Arabian ancestry.

"Automobile bozouc? (broken down?)" he would ask.

"Yes," you would retort. "She has broken down."

"Tch! Tch! Tch!" he would remark sympathetically.

Then would come the walk round the car, looking more like a heap of scrap iron than ever, with her back wheels removed and her anatomy resting on an improvised staging; the innards of her back axle torn out; her cardan shaft on a tarpaulin; her radiator newly repaired with white lead leaning against a post.

"Ah," our visitor would pronounce judicially, "automobile bozouc."

Then, enter Galatian Number Two.

"Automobile bozouc!" Number One would say to him informatively.

"Tch! Tch! Tch!" said Number Two and round the car he would go.

Galatians Numbers Three to Forty-nine would follow and they would all do and say exactly the same thing until the idea occurred to somebody to beg some benzine or sticking plaster or patent fuel which they would continue to do till the train came in, whereafter they would all come back in ones and twos and start all over again.

The idle ones would spend the rest of the day with us leaning within a few inches of whoever was working in the open.

"Tch! Tch! Tch!" they would remark, breathing hard. "See, he is turning a screw! Tch! Tch! Tch!"

And so through the day's operations and sometimes through the evening's if it were moonlight, as it was

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OUR HOME AT AIRANGE DERBEND IN A BLIZZARD

OUR HOME AT AIRANGE DERBEND IN FINE WEATHER

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twice or three times in three weeks. Even in our waiting-room there was no privacy, for it was lighted with French lights opening on the ticket vestibule and the platform. Against these, morning and night, those pitiless male and female faces flattened themselves.

"See, he is eating!"—"Ah, it is dates!"—"He is putting on his trousers!"—"How white his legs!"—"He is drawing water!"—"Tch! Tch! Tch!—Automobile bozouc." It went on all the time. I could not even go to the snow stream half a mile across the plain without an awed procession of simple, good-natured folk trailing without malice in my rear, and gazing for half-hours together at the operation of cleansing a shirt. I had to wear the soap next to my skin because, if it were put down for a moment on the ground, a dozen hands would reach out to pick it up and smell it and it would be passed round the crowd amid murmurs of wonder at its scent of carbolic.

After a little, it became pathetic rather than annoying. We were the only play the dwellers around Airange Plain had seen in all their simple existences. Their attitude of mind was exactly that of an unspoiled tribe of wild Australian blacks and, grown men, they were as simple as the station-master's tiny girl whom, one morning, I found crooning and crowing with John Willy, our Lincoln Imp mascot, in her hands and a dozen awed children about her.

"Adam! Adam!" (Man! Man!), she gurgled, holding up the ugly little devil in a childish paroxysm of delight. Whereupon, it came out that these small Mohammedan children had never, in their cramped existences, seen a doll and most of them had no toys of any description except a few sardine tins which we gave them and which their parents stole greedily amid loud wailings. Their sole amusement seemed to be shepherding the goats around the station and watching the winnowing men tossing wheat into the wind in shovels.

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Or rolling over with Ekmek Annie, that disgraceful and much beribbed dog of ours.

3

The village lay a mile away—the usual village with mud walls and narrow streets and two tiny stores and a post office, staffed with what appeared to be four postmen to every member of the population and a pleasant old Hodja who seemed to have nine wives, and a schoolmaster, who dressed always in a fashionable grey suit and felt hat and tan boots, as if he had stepped that moment out of London. He would come down to the afternoon train from Aleppo, which, with the morning Wagon Lit mail from Stamboul, and tri-weekly recruits' train to Adana, the daily Konia "goods" and the once a month stores train which stopped at every station and sold to the officials and whoever else cared to buy, made up our communications. Invariably he carried a copy of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," though experiment proved that he had scarcely ten words of French.

Airange was certainly an outback village. That was evident from the fact that we were on the spot two days before the gendarmes arrived. On the third day, the local one tramped down from Airange Osman and I found him, having been summoned by the railway porter, sitting in state with the station-master and the old wheat-buyer whom I had christened Abou Hassan. From the fact that he continued sitting when I entered and that he had a Ross rifle across his knee, I took it that he proposed to be insolent. So, as a preliminary, I demanded that he should stand when he addressed me and promptly took his chair.

Then, I asked what Abou Hassan was doing there and had the indignant old gentleman ordered out, and finally I so impressed the Force that it went by the next mail train to Eregli and for the remainder of the time we were there the garrison was enlarged under the com-

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mand of a magnificent being in a khaki riding suit and highly polished leggings who strolled about the valley receiving the obeisances of the population and slapping his calves with a purely ornamental riding crop.

He arrived inconspicuously with a long, dark, smiling individual one afternoon, and very fortunately Francis was asleep in the waiting-room at the time, otherwise there would have been murder. I strolled out to the car and found the two strangers there surrounded by an interested group. The long, dark one had the bonnet off and was removing the spark plugs.

"Here! Haide git!" I shouted. "Clear out!"

He gazed at me with disinterested eyes and started on another plug. I took the spanner out of his hand and pulled down the bonnet. Whereupon he pulled it up again.

"He is a chauffeur!" said the magnificent police official who had not introduced himself. The crowd grinned.

It seemed time for action, so taking the chauffeur by the collar, I reached for our biggest spanner and blew the horn for Frank. The chauffeur seemed amazed, so he backed several yards and sat down on a tarpaulin.

"But I was Enver Pasha's driver," he said, in German, as if that justified everything, "and this is the police commandant."

The police commandant combed his hair with dignity and we all became outwardly good friends. Every day they come to see us, and Enver Pasha's man would tell me stories of the war.

It was a choice time, the war. The choicest of it was when they were marching the prisoners of Kut up through the Cilician gates. It was very cold, snow and ice on the road all the way and the men were exhausted from the starving tramp up the Euphrates in blinding heat, so they died like flies. Enver Pasha inspected them on the way and the chauffeur drove him.

Coming up the passes over the Taurus men dropped

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every few yards. Whereupon, a guard officer would haul the victims to their feet and tie them to men who had not fallen. Then he would find another guard officer who would nominate a pair and they would bet whose couple would stagger furthest up the range, and when the first fell and could go no further they would roll the two pairs of still live bodies over the road edge into the bed of the Cydnus, the River of Antony and Cleopatra, and have "double or quits" as to which would roll the further.

So Enver Pasha's chauffeur said, anyhow. He thought it even a better sport than cock fighting and all the gentle Galatians sat round and when he had interpreted his story to them, murmured "Tch! Tch! Tch!" with a great intaking of breath from sheer pleasure and envy at the thought of what they had missed by not living a couple of hundred miles to the East.

"Yes," some one would say, "but we should all have been there when the Armenians were passing through!" Hundreds of thousands of Armenians marching to exile; men and women and children in droves straggling from Konia, driven like cattle by guards; limping in clinging knots in the daytime and passing like sheeted ghosts at night with a great wailing of children, sometimes, and the crying out of women whom the guards had torn from their families to cheer a bivouac. That was where all those straggling graves came from, down the valley; but it was not possible to bury them all. Sometimes the dogs pulled them down before they died. The dogs were fat in those days. Now that old hound, the half-blind fellow, there, in the shadow of the wall, he . . .

They would prattle on as if they were talking about a Sunday school picnic. So the foreign slaves in Rome might have discussed the doings of the arena. After all, what is death in a land where life is a long, bleak uneventfulness fed with heavy black bread and little or

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nothing else, and ending on an average before forty years of it have gone?

On the second morning, when we had the car almost in pieces and the parts covered with a tarpaulin, Francis woke me at dawn in excitement to say that it had been snowing. The country-side was a white sheet as far as the eye could see. The snow lay a foot deep on the railway platform. The car was full of it; our tools and tarpaulins were mere mounds of white. The thermometer at 9 a.m. was about 7° above zero, Fahr. By eleven it was 5° colder with a blizzard blowing, and since there was no work and no fire (firewood being absolutely non-existent at the station), it was a wretched morning, mitigated only by the beauty of the scene. The mail train came through at midday almost hermetically sealed with the train staff muffled to the eyes in furs. The people who ventured out of it were two fat Teutons and a dark-eyed German girl who hit one of them with a snowball containing a large lump of blue metal, an accident from which she seemed to secure tremendous satisfaction; also a shivering procession of ill-clothed wretches who strove in vain to draw water with a pump solidly frozen. The population of Airange was not visible, but in the afternoon I became so tired of the freezing cement waiting-room and the perpetual cursing of Francis (who had persuaded himself that the Turks, and particularly the station-master, were responsible for the weather and was discussing them accordingly) that I determined to walk through the snow to the village.

4

It was an eerie progress. The wind had dropped and a fine white powder, through which one saw as through gauze, drifted down out of sky of infinite depth, high lighted. The many water channels which ran knee-deep across the plain were stilled and frozen over and, in the village itself, an uncanny silence enshrined every-

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thing. Even the dogs lay perdu, and it was a relief to knock on the door of the little store and find all the gossips crouched round a fire of arduch roots brought from the Taurus, telling their endless tales and smoking their cigarettes in an atmosphere which they had already rendered almost opaque with the mingled odours of sheepskins and tobacco, unwashed man, stale rice, figs and highly spiced pemmican. I bought four dozen eggs and with these distributed through my pockets and tied in my handkerchief I started for "home"—the station.

I had not walked far when the light died and I realized that sundown had arrived and, as I could not see fifty feet and I had incautiously come without my compass, I stood firmly in my tracks and decided that the safest thing I could do was to strike away to the right until I came to the Airange stream which ran across the plain, and follow its banks till I reached the railway.

I had barely gone a hundred yards before I heard piping. The note was sweet, reedy, ethereal, lacking the metallic ring of silver and brass instruments of these modern days; rather, indeed, reproducing the cool trilling of the lark. I paused. It was uncanny there in the snow, which continued falling, falling so noiselessly and so remorselessly. It sounded like the impalpable tuning of some ghost. While I stood, an animal growled beside me, so that I moved hastily.

The simple music went on. I walked forward, and presently came on a sight which here, in high Anatolia, must have been common to all the ages. Xenophon might have seen it and many a wanderer before him—a shepherd boy, with his great, square-shouldered hide coat, blowing on his pan-pipes airs that, perhaps, Homer knew. Certainly, they were so simple that they might well have been born with the dawn of the world, and the pipes might have been lost by the little god himself in the days when Olympus was more than a dark mountain with snow upon its summit.

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All about the shepherd, clustering close to the sound of the music, nuzzling against him and hustling each other discreetly as they vied for a warm inner position in the flock, shuffled his sheep, black and brindle and white ewes, some of them with too early fat-tailed lambs at foot.

And, on the outskirts, lips drawn back in a protective snarl against my presence, stalked a savage wolf-dog, his coat powdered with snow, his fine tail stiff with suspicion. They drifted, without sound of footfall, toward the village. From just such a flock, in just such a place, without change of dress or tune or habit, might some one on his travels through this land have culled the analogy of the Good Shepherd. Easily might one have seen such a sight anywhere between Iconium and Ecbatana nineteen hundred years ago.

I reached the station with all my eggs safe and very wet feet.

5

After a little more than a week of waiting, Knowles returned in the train with the bad news that no spare parts had reached Beirut, though I had cabled three weeks before, asking that they should be sent immediately. He brought a letter, however, which showed that, after a fortnight's delay, our organizers in England had sent a crown wheel and pinion thither by parcel post. That did not worry us, now, for Knowles had cabled England on April 8th asking that further spares should be sent with all speed to Constantinople to our agents there, and, as I had made special arrangements before leaving England for the King's Messenger to carry parcels for us and I knew that a messenger was due to leave on April 9th, we had reason to expect that by April 15th we should be on our way again.

I promptly packed poor Knowles, who had enjoyed 160 hours in the train during the previous week, to

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Beirut again, with instructions to reorganize our routing so that we could travel directly down the Euphrates from Aleppo. Then we set to trying every conceivable expedient to help ourselves in his absence. It was not easy, as we had almost run out of food, and the little methylated spirit fuel which we had, had gone in bribes to the station-master and gendarmes. Furthermore, what with thefts and our own usage, the benzine supply had fallen so low that I dare not use much more to make fires.

It was at this stage that, having failed to buy firewood, I began to collect coal cast from railway engines and bits of debris from timber waggons, carrying them tenderly to our waiting-room and secreting them as if they had been gold. By this means we had one thermos full of hot tea every day, and once every two days I spared a pint of benzine which paid for the use of the station-master's Primus. On the fourth day after I instituted this practice, I woke to find all the school children of the village and station spread out along the line and the permanent way stripped clean of everything that would burn. From then onward, no engine dropped so much as a gramme of coal within a mile of Airange that it was not pounced upon.

Eventually I made friends with Abdul and Hatab Din, two small boys about twelve years old who belonged to the pumping engineer. They were pleasant-mannered lads, much the cut of Australian bush boys. In the evenings they were accustomed to come and sit on our tarpaulin while I taught them English words, which they learned with great avidity, and they added to my colloquial Turkish which now, after seven weeks in the country, had become quite competent for all ordinary purposes in villages where the local vocabulary seemed not to exceed five hundred words.

I entered into a contract whereby Abdul and Hatab Din made tea for us every day, and all went well till one

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morning a marauding lady borrowed our precious supply of leaf. Then I had to go to the village and buy a pound of tea, and all the village came to see me purchase it, for half an okka was superfluity in that pinched land and the chai was kept in a glass-stoppered jar as if it were a chemical and weighed out with a tiny pair of gold scales to the poor villagers. The storekeeper, who was a cautious fellow and who knew that he would scarcely be believed if he told the tale of my lavishness in a city whose two emporiums could rarely boast a whole loaf of bread or more than forty pounds of rice at one and the same time, cunningly kept me in converse while he brought witnesses to the record sale; and ever afterwards, while in Airange, I was known as the man who bought a whole pound of tea at once. There was a great drawing of breath over it among the gossips.

6

We gradually exhausted everything that could be done upon the car. We mended her radiator and freed all her splines which had been machine-fitted at the works, in such a way that no poor traveller could take her apart without a Spanish windlass. I ground them to freedom with my own fair hands and a tin of valve-grinding paste until my fingers ached. Then we laboriously devised a sort of motor drill on fire-brigade lines which enabled us to dismantle any part of the machinery in a minimum possible time, each man at his appointed station.

Finally, for two days we meditated over our driving gear and coming to the conclusion, inescapable, that our crown wheels were breaking because the whole differential casing was several times too small and weak, we reinforced it with copper wire cables reeved through the lubrication holes of the case and I sent to Knowles in Aleppo for a reinforcing ring to be bolted opposite the crown wheel.

Much of our time was given up to discussion as to

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how we could make a temporary crown wheel which would carry us into Syria. Firstly, I tried to secure permission to go to Konia, where there were railway works, or to Eskishehr, where there was a military flying station, hoping to be able to have one cut at either of those places; but the police refused to allow me to move except in accordance with the terms of my passport. Then I wrote to the Commandants at those centres and to storekeepers I had dealt with, asking them to see the authorities, sending them rough drawings and full specifications with models of sections of our wheel made from the clay of the local river bed, but I had no replies. I believe that my letters and models never got beyond the Civil Police Officer who haunts every train in Asia Minor.

We debated at length whether it would not be possible to cut two broken crown wheels so as to fit them together as if they were whole and by bolting them fast to a ring made from the third casualty, to concoct a jury wheel which would carry us to Adana. We bestowed much thought and argument on this project, disputing backward and forward. I drew an elaborate plan as to where each cut should be made. I held long sessions with the pumping engineer who was not certain that in asking for the use of his furnace one day I was not contemplating sorcery of some kind. Lastly, we had to piece together our knowledge of the effect of heat on metals, which was comparatively small. On top of that came the poser of recase-hardening the wheels when they had been cut. Four evenings after we first began to wrestle with this puzzle, I woke up out of a deep sleep with the word "Fluxite" running through my mind. It was worth a trial.

Next morning we spent several hours with hacksaws, taking turns at cutting, and by train time all that remained to be done was the last cut. I went to collect our mail before the station-master should steal it, and on my return was greeted by a sad-faced Birtles and the information

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that the last cut had somehow got made in the wrong place and that the dissected parts would not fit. Five days' planning and scheming had gone for nothing and, in my hand, I held, too, the bad news that good old England had not sent our spare parts by King's Messenger, but, choosing the longest and slowest possible route, had forwarded them via Constanza by parcel post.

"They may," said the letter of our Stamboul agent, in effect, "arrive in here in twenty-two days or it may be a month or six weeks."

That awful summary of possibilities killed stone-dead our chances of completing the journey to Australia. With the delays which we had already faced through breakages, it was now beyond doubt that we could not reach Burma before the rainy season. It meant that, plugging on through Persia and India with our limping experiment, we should be forced to face the worst of the Indian summer. And it did not cheer us that, in the same mail as we received our news, came a newspaper sent by a well-wisher in Stamboul in which a British manufacturer gently reproved us Colonials for our habit of buying American motor-cars.

Francis went out on the plain and shed tears of rage. I was beyond tears. There was nothing to do but be patient and pray that the Beirut spares would soon arrive in Knowles's custody.

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CHAPTER XVI

LIFE BEHIND THE TAURUS

I

ALL good and bad things finish sometime or other. At the end of three weeks we left Airange Derbend, though not without anxious days of waiting. Knowles, after his second departure, seemed to have disappeared into the blue with a profane notification from Adana that he had fever. Each day there was, of course, no news from London. And to cap everything, the police chief was becoming restive at our continued presence and every morning would come round to ask in a most inhospitable manner when we were leaving and when our letters were coming from London and why Knowles had gone and where; and why we did not abandon Scrap Iron, to which battered hulk he could not at all comprehend our devotion, and take the train to Australia. Also, he never failed to tell me that our passports had expired, and worst of all he began sitting down when he spoke to me and substituting "Boo Ingleez" (that Englishman) for "Boo cheleybe" (that gentleman) which I had at first enjoyed, when he spoke of me to the station-master, as I discovered through some of my friends.

Still, life was fascinating. I went every day to Airange Osman and came to know everybody in that little town, which was a most neighbourly place.

"Ekmek! Chai! Yamurghtah!" (Bread! Tea! Eggs!) the population would shout at me as I strode in and they

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rose from their sunny doorsteps. Then the fat little Russian storekeeper would cry:

"No bread to-day, brother," whereupon a merry black eye in a tousled head and a strong smell of beeswax would come round a corner opposite and call: "Effendim, Achmed's wife is baking. My son shall get half a loaf for you."

"Thanks be to Allah, brother"—No Mohammedan should ever thank the giver. Formally, the Lord is the only provider of favours.

We would all adjourn to the shop of the shoemaker, to be found sitting before his clean table, shiny with the black translucent wax which had been accumulated on it by himself and his father before him. Perhaps the Hodja would come in and certainly the local wholesale agent and buyer of produce who wore a European suit the colour of ground cinnabar and almost always began the conversation with: "Bon jour, monsieur. Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq."

"Vous parlez français très bien, monsieur. Depuis quand l'apprenez vous?"

"He says," my cinnabar friend would announce in the local language, "that I speak French very well."

"Tch! Tch! Tch!" the audience would remark in wonder, and possibly the Hodja, shrewd to use an occasion to point a moral to a flock growing laxer every day: "How great is God who gives us knowledge!"

Then the tales would begin, and all through them would be woven the squeak of the cobbler's needle piercing soles or the muffled ring of one of his long, precise row of bright hammers. It would be: "When they conscripted me to fight the Greeks" or "When there were those happenings about the Armenians"—for in the interior they are more chary about the word "massacre" than they are in the towns, since they have not forgotten the time when the use of it was a criminal offence. We would hear about long marches in the

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snow, breathless fighting in the mountains; of the sand-hills of the south, with a fiend of an Australian light horseman who lay all day picking off every man who so much as showed an ear above a bush and little knowing that he was wasting bullets because already his victims were dying of thirst and fever.

It was very simple story-telling, but I often thought, observing the stark, real directness obtained in their narratives told with a four-hundred-word vocabulary, how prodigal even the best of English writers can be with words in getting their effects. By the time it had all finished the room would be full of men and smoke. For the postman, who had early in our visit been pulled off a bolting horse by the station clothesline and then thrown over a fence, would have limped in with a "Salaam," and the gendarme with his khaki uniform and puttees and his immense shako labelled with his number in brass Arabic figures; also, all the old men within a quarter of a mile. Occasionally the Russian storekeeper, a tight, round man of Napoleonic build who had been in Italy, would shyly bring a fearsome-looking balaika and the rafters would ring with "La donna è mobile" and the last "è di pensier" would go ringing among the peaks of the Bulgar Dagh as if Caruso himself had sent it winging.

I taught them "If you knew Susie" and "I want to be happy," which were the fashionable tunes in Constantinople at that time, and in return my Russian friend played weird peasant dances and the second grocer (who was not a Russian) sometimes gave us a treat with his gramophone for which he had five records of the art of the Arab singing-girls.

I have never seen an Arab singing-girl singing, but I know, after listening carefully to the records she makes, exactly how it is done. A good, strong Sheik takes her into the desert, rolls up his djibbah, spits on his hands and, selecting a stout piece of wood, proceeds rhythmi-

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cally to hammer her on the ribs where his blows will best resound. You hear the thud, thud, thud of the stick behind the long drawn squeal of the maiden, which is suddenly broken by a pained shriek of surprise that makes the skies shudder as her tormentor pokes a red-hot dagger into some soft part of her to give her a fresh impetus. . . .

"Tch! Tch! Tch! God is very good!" mutters the ecstatic audience, now depleted by the departure of the Hodja, who has left while we were singing about "Susie, O what a goil," a little earlier. He is a little displeased and suspicious, is the Hodja. He does not understand Susie at all and thinks I may be a missionary in disguise inculcating Christian principles by stealth into his flock with infidel hymns.

The first time I heard the Arab lady sing, I praised her too much and her owner lent one of his precious records of her along with his gramophone to the assistant railway porter so that he might brighten our evenings for us. The assistant railway porter put the gramophone against our wall and played the record over for us nineteen times until Francis, who is impatient of instrumental music at any time, rose and prayed for a shot gun so loudly that the youth desisted from his entertainment.

2

In time I came to love Airange Osman. Its chickens and its sleepy dogs, which were not nearly so savage when you came to know them as they were when you were a stranger; its peach and plum trees which, after the snow (the season was later here than further north), burst into a welter of faery blossom; its donkey pack teams from the mountains; its occasional venturing camel. There was a lazy thrill in wandering round it on a long-shadowed afternoon crying: "Hail, Ibrahim, Peace be with you and have you any eggs?" and in the subsequent routing of outraged hens out of straw-lined lofts.

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Then the walk home was a sheer joy with its call at the smithy on the outskirts. To meet the Airange smith was to understand the romance of the anvils of old time. He did not look like a Turk with his great shoulders and heavy grey moustache and close-clipped hair. His walls were hung round with the tools that he had made himself and the chains he had forged and iron of many a graceful shape, his handiwork. The interior of his haunt was dim, but it lighted with a ruddy glow when he pulled the long plait of hide that made his vast bed of charcoal flame like the sunset. I would not have been surprised if he had told me that he settled there because the place was on the track of the Crusaders and that times were not what they used to be since Saladin had died and link armour had gone out of fashion. There would have been no difficulty in believing, either, that his birthplace was a cave in the Riesengebirge where the German dwarfs come from. But he never talked, so I never knew, though he had the independent respectfulness of a good master artisan and would regularly come to his door bowing and wiping his great paws on his apron, to watch me set out on my tramp to the station across the plain dotted with spreading flocks and piping shepherds and divided by the variable knee-deep irrigation channels, which sent one to camp wet to the knees and seriously imperilled one's cargo of eggs.

Very occasionally a waggon would catch you up on its way to the railway and you would make your journey behind two heady arabs. One day the driver of one of these said to me:

"You are British?"

"Australian," said I. "You know Australia?"

"Ah, yes," he said, "I know Australia. I know it well."

Stopping his horses, he removed his trousers and proved his words. Some Australian rifleman in Palestine, a sound shot, had punctured both his legs.

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I had so much become part of Airange Osman before we left that I told Francis I intended to stand for mayor next year. But Francis, to whom the prospect and the Turk were alike vile—especially since the station-master had given the detached ignition head a few playful turns with the result that it took two hours to retime it—merely grunted with disgust and spoke aloud for the fiftieth time his plans for wrecking the next Turkish loan.

I did not altogether blame his attitude, for he steadfastly refused to visit the village and all he saw was the railway station, of which the inhabitants became more and more unbearable. Abou Hassan, ancient wheat-buyer, was the kernel of our troubles. He was convinced, I think, that we were spies and never a policeman came near the place that he failed to tell about his suspicions. He it was who introduced two disreputable people whom I christened the First and Second Murderers, whose countenances were remarkable for innumerable pimples and for the protuberance of their eyes and whose duties appeared to consist of leaning, together, on some part of the car, the livelong day, breathing very hard, saying nothing whatever, and only changing their positions to get a better view. There was chronic accusation on their visages and, even when you ate, they seemed certain in their own minds that you were devouring dynamite which would presently explode and blow up the neighbourhood.

At sundown, each day, they held conclave with their master with much waving of arms, and when I at last became tired of it all and chased them away with a spanner, their speed and terror were such as to advertise that they had no doubt at all about the ill-will which we felt for them and the evilness of our natures.

Their doings were not, however, the end-all of Abou Hassan's activities. He became suspicious of our documents. Came a time when some station official would approach me and divert my attention while the old man

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and the station-master went through my satchel. And, if I sat in the waiting-room to write a letter, there was usually a distant watch across the railway line futilely observing, so that every day after a while I felt impelled to write the rhyme of "Mary had a little lamb" or some lines of shrieking Greek from the "Medea" upon sheets of paper and hide them ostentatiously in the stove, then retiring a mile across the plain to a bend in the river, where with field-glasses carried thither in my shirt I could enjoy the subsequent perplexity of the Inquisition, bowing its heads over Roman characters or over script which the station-master knew, having lived in Bulgaria, was undoubtedly not Bulgarian, though so like it.

Quite unexpectedly, one night, appeared the man with the knife and that seemed at the moment very serious.

3

Francis for some days had been sleeping in the car, because he held that the waiting-room was a dangerous spot.

This was nonsense as it takes a lot to frighten Francis. As most of our gear was in the room, I remained there. This night there was a half-moon which threw a dull bar of light through the window beneath which I was sleeping on the floor.

The evening was very quiet and still and I fell into a deep sleep from which I was half awakened by movement in the room.

"Francis looking for something," said my Inner Self cosily, and I was just about to make some sleepy remark when I saw that it was not Francis. It was a stranger. He was, to my disordered imagination, twelve feet high and three feet broad, and he was on all fours near my feet, very still, with a knife in his mouth. What sort of a knife I could not judge, for I only caught the gleam of its blade, but it seemed to me, on the moment, to be the family sabre of some ancient brigand, lovingly

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edged and polished in anticipation of the dirtiest of dirty work.

Many people in such circumstances are, I believe, inordinately brave. I have heard them say so. They rise up with a loud war cry and the last mortal sound the intruder hears is an urgent shout for a dish-rag to mop up the blood. I have none of that sort of courage. I would have yelled for help had that been possible, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth as if it had been glued there. I would have risen and retreated, but my limbs were all jelly; my fingers would not keep still. I felt the long hairs on the top of my head rise up and stand paralysed and the little ones on the back crawling higher on my skull to avoid drowning in the flood of icy perspiration which began to exude along my spine.

All the time a small, cold devil kept jumping up and down inside me saying: "Get yourself awake! Get your bearings! Don't move! Wake! Wake!" I lay like a rock and my mind cleared and I found myself planning. Obviously, so long as my enemy kept the knife in his mouth, he could not become offensive with it.

"Take your time . . ." whispered the Small, Cold Devil.

I took it. During the next twenty-seven years, in the middle of which the visitor made one single step forward, I mapped out exactly what I would do. It was an elaborate scheme, and brought the marrow back gradually into my bones. At the crucial moment, I would rise with a loud whoop of rage and hate (which I suspected would have several involuntary quavers in it) and, blanket clutched in both determined hands, I would dive suddenly over the aggressor. He would be inside the blanket. He would be dazed, and while he was freeing himself I would rush to the door and send the stars reeling with calls for reinforcements, the fire-brigade and the police. Now . . .

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In that instant, all my schemes melted into thin air. The figure took another step. He was beside me. His movement had been determined.

The Small Devil woke again inside me and cried: "Lift your knee! Catch him under the chin!" My scalp seemed to subside and a knife clattered suddenly to the floor. I, somehow, had a thermos flask full of hot tea in my hand and was hitting somebody with it and then the thermos had gone rolling into a corner and I had one bare foot in some one's face and another in his abdominal region, while I twisted his quivering thumb. There were blankets and sheepskins all over us and an arm was thrashing the floor. The arm was mine. There was a squeak of protest in the dark such as a criminal might give in his last moment in the electric chair. The figure which I was torturing gasped and went limp. I let go, feeling instantly exultant.

Then I went limp and sweaty.

"I've killed him," I said to myself. "I'll bet he's a policeman and I'll be crucified."

"Haide git!" I cried, more to break the silence than anything else, and never was man more relieved than I, when my victim responded by crawling dazedly on all fours down the steps on to the platform like a beaten dog.

Came a subdued chorus of giggles from across the railway line. That seemed to put a different complexion on affairs and feeling that this was all merely a practical joke by the lads of the village to try our courage, I became magnificently brave once more. I dared my assailant to come back at the peril of his life. I made remarks about his father and his grandfather. I threw his knife after him, having ostentatiously spat upon it. Then I went back to bed.

I cannot say that I went willingly. I very badly wanted to sneak down to the car and wake Francis for company, but my instinct said, firstly, that if our enemy

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had really meant business, a hundred yards in the open dark was a perilous Odyssey; secondly, that the moral effect of a contemptuous and immediate slumber would work great good. I did not achieve the slumber, but for half an hour I managed a creditable snore. Then I lay with the door closed by a barricade of tin plates and other noisy impedimenta fortifying myself with tea from the thermos flask which had earlier done such good work, and hoping for an early dawn.

4

Next day, when I told Francis he said he was not surprised because the Turks were all murderers and he would now most certainly make it impossible for them to borrow in the London market. Since the ration train had come in, we bought two bottles of douziko and seizing the excuse of a pretended carouse, decided to share the car together. At ten o'clock I thought I heard somebody breathing outside. I could hear nothing when I lifted the tarpaulin. Half an hour later I heard the same sound and stepped out on to a gentleman's face. He pretended to be drunk, but he had been squatting listening by the footboard. When we had done with him, he was really drunk.

The remainder of the night was given up to advances by creeping feet; mutterings in the gloom and savage forays in which Francis, armed with a spare back axle and a copper hammer, chased unseen people who by their pace were easily identifiable as Slip Carr, the Olympic Runner, and the late Charles Paddock, holder of the hundred yards record.

On the following afternoon we saw two beautiful sights. The first was Enver Pasha's former chauffeur whom I met in the village. His face seemed to have been through a mangle and he had a fetching limp. He said that he had been run over by an araba and that the stallions in it had trampled on him. He had, he said

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with a grin, had a very narrow escape. I sympathized with him and offered to give him sticking plaster if he would come to the station, but he declined with thanks. Possibly he had refereed the races the evening before and knew all about the pace and ferocity of Francis.

The second spectacle of the day was even lovelier to our aching eyes. It consisted of a very small, very dirty man in a khaki uniform and an outrageous hat. His skin was dull yellow with fever. His beard was untrimmed. His countenance, as he limped down the platform, was illuminated by a triumphant grin. One of his hands held a broken suitcase tied up with rope and tucked lovingly under the other arm was a box which evidently held a crown wheel and pinion.

Behind, to cap his obviously eminent desirableness, strode the head porter with a case of bully beef, beyond price to two carnivora who had not tasted flesh for nearly a fortnight.

"I say, old man . . ." shouted the Beautiful Apparition.

"Are you real?" I muttered.

"By God, I am," shouted Captain Billy Knowles, "so damn real that I've been 160 hours in the train and had fourteen separate passports and been pinched for trying to import whisky. I say, old man . . ."

I turned round to see why Francis was saying nothing. He was standing on his head to express his joy.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE LAND OF MANY BATTLES

I

NEXT day being Anzac Day, with the Jack and stars of Australia boldly flying from one wind-screen mast and a tiny Union Jack from the other, we tore ourselves away from Airange. Tore is the right word, because Old Scrap Iron was loath to go. She poured water from the bottom of the radiator in streams, which was ungrateful since we had spent much tender care and all my medicated wool on the healing of its wounds, together with a pound of white lead which in the end turned out to be only paint after the illusory habit of many things which we bought in Stamboul.

The smith had a busy hour with his quaint soldering while final repairs were made. Also, there were ceremonious farewells to be said during which, with great gusto, I detailed to an intent gendarmerie a full list of our losses. The gendarmerie did not look even surprised at this talk of thefts, but, as that part of the land of Asia Minor had been in the robbery business for at least 2000 years, possibly it was not remarkable. One P. Servillius Isauricus received his honorific from old Rome as long ago as 79 B.C. for cleaning up the Isaurian brigands thereabouts. The station-master during the middle of the recital, however, disappeared unobtrusively, with the celerity of one who is going to hide something under his mattress. He bade me an effusive good-bye, with an arm round my neck, and we went

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away with nothing now wrong with us except most of the cylinders pumping oil, along the bumpy treeless way to the rabbit warren town of Eregli whence, after a happy quarter of an hour with the chief of police, we began our pilgrimage again, through eagle-haunted gorges, and dank villages into the maw of the Cilician Pass.

At Uru Kushla a broad road came from Kaiserieh debouching many camels and asses and much walking traffic into the busy streets.

Then, the mountains closed in on us. The sun dropped out of the sky sullenly and left us with, tower on tower, sierra on sierra, the huge bulk of the Taurus rising, as if it were half in a humour to topple and crush us. The wind was cold off the snow, but the night was brisk and clear with the lamps of Charles's Wain riding over us in a heaven of turquoise. A long cavalcade of moon-shadows ambled from peak to white peak ghostly and silent, as if they had been the wraiths of a hundred departed armies.

We lay against the lichened wall of an ample garden full of gnarled trees, the greatest we had seen since leaving England, with ethereal poplars behind them along the banks of a sweetly tinkling stream. In front, not many yards away, a ploughed field, strewn with white. Up the hill, to our right, a track, restless with the grunting of tired camels and the trot, trot of cold and belated pack donkeys.

It was a gorgeous, scented, crystalline evening, which made one glad to be alive, brightened as it was for us, accustomed to the dreary nothingness of the muddy plain we had left, with the almost forgotten scents of timber and running water. I strolled out into the ploughed field to see what sort of fertilizer the farmer was using that shone so snowily upon the rich, upturned earth. The first pieces I picked up were the disjointed bones of a man's arm, with half the fingers gone.

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2

The vale was the top of the Pass. Here the prisoners of Kut had camped and died in dozens after their ascent from the plains below. Here the Armenian exiles and before them the men of Darius, of Sennacherib, of Frederick Barbarossa; of all the might of Hit and Tarsus and Persia and Assyria and crusading Western Europe; Cicero, perhaps, when he was pro-consul; and the Saracens going to rape Amorium with forty thousand spears, had paused awhile going up or down to refresh themselves and take breath or to recover from the passage of the Gates. Millions of exhausted men must have died around this valley through history, and not all their dyings had changed it except to enrich its soil a little. The fall of the great trees which decorated it would have robbed it of more splendour than all the human death which it had seen. Wholesale human dyings had not even spoiled the sunrise. Changing rapidly from translucent pearl to fire opal and scarlet and angry furnace red, it came out of a black cloud and burst into a thousand swords of light whose colours were governed by the part of the landscape over which they hung.

There lay the pass underneath the mighty Ala Dagh, clean and rain-washed, alive with the small early morning traffic and the creaking of trees and the tinkle of the baby avalanches of shingle which slid gently down the inclines of the road cuttings. After the dead, worn-out plateau plains it came as a sort of awe-inspiring relief. We Australians very little realize how live our soil and timber are and how one can miss the movement where there are no trees to rustle.

The plane tree was there and the juniper and the beech and the pine, the fir and the unrespectable arduch, which is a crossbred but lovely. The air was still crystal as the night before, rain-washed and scented with the odours of clean wet earth and pine-cones and fresh

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wood smoke from the fires of travellers. All the tiredness fell from our shoulders. An eagle circled above us and we looked upwards, craning our necks to follow its flight till it was lost in thin air against a straight, saw-tooth mountain seen so clearly that you could pick out individual tree boles upon its sides. I let my eye fall from it to one range to another and another, and finally to the wall of grey blue rock which rose almost sheer out of the River Cydnus, purling yellow with snow water over the stones near our feet. That was fully 1000 feet high, and in between it and the mountain of the trees were five more of its kind. Beyond, giant steps rose until they melted nearly 20,000 feet up into the snow-capped summit of the Taurus.

3

The Cilician Pass is a place of great marches and great names. It is the only site in the world where you can be sure that for a while you are marching actually in the footprints of the great of history. Its cliffs have allowed none to deviate since the beginning of time, except by so much as forty yards in places where the Turkish engineers have raised the highway level from the river-bed to the hill-side. Alexander of Macedon, Mithridates with his barbaric hordes, Sennacherib with his Cappadocian stallions, St. Paul on his donkey, the sweating, straining oxen and the thousand slaves who perspired and grunted up the grades with the vast Egyptian needle which Theodosius hauled 2000 miles to set up in Byzantium (it stands there, unchipped, to-day), Cicero in his litter, the Crusaders in their armour, Haroun al-Raschid of the Thousand Nights—it confined them all in a few feet of space and poured them out after miles of meandering along perilously slippery tracks through the Gate itself, which is walled in on either side by precipices, rising above a passage not more than eleven feet wide apart from the stream,

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AT THE CILICIAN GATE

IN THE TAURUS MOUNTAINS

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which insists on sharing a confinement so winding and narrow that we could barely squeeze through it with our near wheels touching the rock wall.

In its bed lay a rusty and overturned German motor-lorry shadowed by the rock on which a soldier of Marcus Aurelius had carved his inscription. Nature gave us a midday thunderstorm as we passed through, and the Gate was a place of awe, in which the voice of Jove roared and reverberated among the countless gorges and echoed back from the dark castle of the Sclavonian guard high over us, above the shrieks of the wind-tormented trees.

It seemed to me that of all the cradles of history I had seen these mountains were the only ones which measured up to their events. Most of the European scenes of the past are built over by speculators or defaced with man-made monuments or appear tiny against their imaginative bulk as conceived before you see them. Waterloo is better suited to grow turnips than for Armageddon. The Somme is banal. Hohenlinden is a dreary waste of unbroken snow; Mohacs Field a muddy flat along a wide, yellow Danube whose banks are crumbling drearily because they have been almost stripped of trees. The pillars of Diana's temple in Ephesus are grey and dull and decrepit like St. Sofia which holds them. Doryleum, home of an ancient oracle, houses a Turkish flying corps with dirty nails. Antioch Minor and Carchemish, Derbe and Metropolis are uninspiring mounds of earth. So are Babylon and Nineveh and Ur of the Chaldees and the cities of Hit which laid its Royal Road 2000 miles across the Near East. The other Hit, quarry of Babylon, has become a hill built of its own rubbish, a mere warren for beggars and syphilitics scented with the stink of bitumen and asafœtida. But the Cilician Pass is the lap of the gods, fit to nurse the mightiest of events, versatile enough to provide apt settings for bannered and surging hosts or a limping disciple with a staff and his faith for support and shanks's

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mare for his nag. For all it has seen it is as clean and untouched by the hand of man as when the earth began, and even the guard houses which history has built in its defiles and then rebuilt again and again have been absorbed into the mountain-sides, so that to-day the only wayfarers it holds apart from the deer and the wolf and the eagle are bright-coloured nomads leisuring on donkey or camel to or from the Cimmerian Plain below. You see them at intervals gravely passing or camped in their rough black tents, along with the sparse inmates of small hovels or bare stone khans and tiny villages. Most of the latter are old, the women bare breasted and wrinkled, the men grizzled and decrepit, so that one likes to think that they are the drift-wood of long past wars waiting in vain for the return of the good old times when the rattle of the drums brought the stones trickling down the inclines of the Pass.

4

Through the Gates the country changed. The foothills appeared with tumbling boulders and shrubs and heather and, lo, we seemed suddenly to be somewhere off Sydney, with a reconstructed foreground spread out in front of us. The rocks looked the same; the vegetation and the spring flowers were the same; but we were really advancing to a wide, level plain with the misty blue of the Mediterranean bordering it. In its centre lay a ragged pink mark as if somebody in the sky had dropped a splash of watered red ink on the land. Tarsus, birthplace of St. Paul and once the home of Haroun al-Raschid. To the left of this, waving grain for mile on mile on a fertile level, where, when we reached it, was more Australia—the best of the western districts of Victoria even to some of the new red-roofed houses and the gum trees planted on the railway stations. Away to our left, again, smoke before a mountain. Adana and the Amanus range. We had dinner in Adana and

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the police promised that we should be out and on our way at 8 a.m. next morning and asked us to be at their headquarters at that hour.

Up betimes, we fulfilled their wish. They left us waiting in the street. I had sent Knowles to do treaty because he had become an old inhabitant of this police station, having been through it several times. After two hours when he had not returned I organized a rescue party of one through the arch where the seal-cutters lived and the yard full of sad recruits and found him in the vestibule. On one side of him was a young gentleman who, by the look of his clothing, had been hauled incontinently from his domestic chores to answer a charge of keeping four wives in defiance of the ordinances of the new regime. Exhibits (*a*), (*b*), (*c*) and (*d*) were all there and wailing, and to make the matter worse were all veiled in contravention of the law. Also, they had brought their mothers along with them and their mother-in-law and three strange and unexplained females whom I presumed to be the deputy or assistant mothers of the main villain of the piece.

On the other side of our emissary were four Bulgarians, two of whom were weeping because they were likely to be sent back to Bulgaria, and as they were Communists and had left their native country expeditiously after the episode of the blowing up of the Cathedral of which I have told the story in an earlier chapter, none of them seemed to feel homesick. The tears were for themselves.

Trying to comfort them all was a young German who had started to walk round the world, and, having reached Adana, was stranded. The rest of the view was made up of policemen, including a Cypriote, in charge of our case, who asked me devoutly if we had any Bibles on board. He said he had two and had read every word of them and he was proud, also, of being British born and of his English, which was the best we

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had heard spoken since we left Constantinople. He said that in time the Police Chief would see some of us—possibly in the afternoon. I knew what that meant.

"You go and give my kind regards to the Chief," said I, "and tell him that if he does not visa our passports at once in accordance with his instructions from Angora, I shall leave immediately unless he arrests us. And if he arrests us, I shall telegraph all the newspapers for which I am correspondent and we will make an international incident of it."

Back he came and haled me into the sanctum sanctorum, where an insolent young man sat surrounded almost entirely by obsequious constabulary.

"You must wait," said he, "till it suits me."

"Nothing of the sort," said I. "You have your orders."

"I know nothing of you. Perhaps you are a brigand," said he insultingly, while the police tittered.

"You have all the papers on the table."

"I will see you again at three o'clock."

"You won't. I shan't be here unless you arrest me. I dare you to do it. And I warn you to be less insolent."

The Chief seemed sorry that he had elected to speak through an interpreter.

"This is not Angora," he said feebly. "This is the centre of Turkey."

"Then why did you massacre a thousand Armenians here for saying so?"

"I shall see you at three o'clock."

"You won't."

I stalked out. I had got to the outer door and Knowles was asking me what all the row was about, when our policeman followed me hot-foot.

"The Chief says please not to go. All your papers will be ready in three minutes. Will you be pleased to see him?"

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"I have no desire to see him. Tell him I am glad he has come to his senses."

Out came the Chief. "It is all over," said he curtly, as if I had greatly injured him. "You must not be hasty."

We went out and sat in the car. Also, we sat in the sun. It was blazing there by the sea coast and the Cilicians grouped themselves about us, for to admire and for to see and an unpleasant experience it was. All the degenerates of all the worn-out civilizations and marauding armies appeared to have formed a union to mould the inhabitants of Adana. I have seen the thugs of India, the ash-strewn fakirs, the fanatics who beat blood from their shoulders with chains, the Bainings of New Britain, the Cape York gins who carry their dead babies tied upon their heads, the gangling savages of the Fly River. But nowhere have I seen such a collection of loathsomeness as we had around us in Adana. Faces with scarcely any chins formed about mouths that were tiny slits. There were foreheads that receded like those of a monkey's; noses that were a pure horror of deformity; ostrich necks; empty, meaningless expressions.

They stood around us in the sun, mouths open, saying not one word, but gazing, gazing, gazing till even the patient and good-humoured Billy Knowles, usually in his element with a crowd, really lost his temper for the first time on the journey. They stood there stroking the bright parts of the car with epileptic hands or with shuddersome things which were not hands at all; for at one time there were no less than four claws within sight which had been built by the Creator without fingers or with twisted and nailless thumbs or with some other perversion of form that it was not good to look upon. Now and then, some of them, not content with fingering the car, would furtively touch your coat-sleeve to feel its texture and throwing about angrily, the wrath would be chilled out of you when you found yourself looking, at

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close quarters, into the eyes of a frightened dog dilated above a mouth, which dribbled with sheer terror.

When you drove the mob off, they shrank away as if they were accustomed to blows, but after a moment or two drifted back. The street loafers of Adana provide a salutary lesson in Divine punishment. I had plenty of leisure to observe them carefully, and it seemed to me, sorting them out, that most of them could thank for their deficiencies their mothers' sight of some of the awful events which have disgraced the town in modern history, combined with the long heritage of inbreeding and terror and the debauchery of a city which for 2000 years has been a clearing house for invading armies and their attendant rabble.

5

The three minutes of the Police Chief wove itself into hours. I had many passages at arms, but it was with a self-congratulatory feeling that we camped that night on a flowered mound under which the wind-blown dust of many centuries had buried a Roman fort. All that remained of Rome was a litter of broken tiles upon the summit, with odd piecemeal bits of pottery and crumbled pebbles of building stone. In common with a dozen other buildings of the kind it had become its own monument and a beacon by which you might steer, knowing that the road would run somewhere near its base. Ours was beyond Hamidieh, and to reach it we had passed through Missis, which is a desiccated village, an involuntary museum in which decayed Roman and Byzantine remains have been patched with the accretions of Saracen and Goth and connected, across the Pyramus, with the Syrian road, by a dignified Arab bridge on the nether side of which lies a lichened and lovely stone khan.

The Cilician Plain is as flat as the palm of your hand, save for odd intrusive and isolated crags and small ranges defended by glowering castles. All around,

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IBRAHIM OF AIRANGE THINKS THE DIFFERENTIAL IS A BOMB

A TREE NEAR OSMANIEH, ASIA MINOR

It looks ordinary enough, but all its branches bore marks of the suspension of Armenians.

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from any part of it right down to the still and sunlit Mediterranean, you may see its enclosing mountains, which feed its fertility continuously with their snow waters through half a dozen yellow rivers—the Taurus Range and the Amanus Range, with the topmost height of the Ala Dagh in the Anti-Taurus shining over them all. Your way is bound in by heavily cropped fields of barley and wheat and oats, larger and better farmed than any other fields we saw in Turkey and branded with all the evidence that the wooden plough as a disturber of the soil and the hand flail and the wind as a winnower are seeing their last days and are giving place to the six-blade disk and the harvester.

The very confinement and flatness of the plain made it a natural battle-ground in the old days when the rush of the phalanx, the chariot charge and the forward surge of ordered lines and squares were the fashionable modes of battle. For hundreds of miles around there was not a site so convenient for war, where there was unlimited water for armies and feed for horses and population for camp followers and reasonable women for diversion, as in this well-guarded Cilicia. It was to Near Eastern Asia what Belgium was to Northern Europe, a kind of bloody football ground gradually fertilized with the flesh and bones of a hundred races which began to invade it centuries before it shook to the thunder of Alexander's battlefield of Issus, near where we were camped. Even within the last decade it resounded to the hoarse coughing of the French "Seventy-fives" and the screams of the mangled Armenians of Osmanieh.

The snow peaks about it have looked down on the passing of a dozen worlds, now buried under a rich soil. When we were there, huddled in the rain under a tarpaulin, on that entombed roof under which Mark Antony and philosophic old Marcus Aurelius, and possibly even Cleopatra herself might have sheltered in the days of the Provinces, it was knee-deep with the spring flowers,

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crocus and buttercup, yellow dandelion, pale blue scylla and asphodel which carpet every inch of the country which is not under grain.

6

On the morrow we crossed the Giaour Dagh to within sight of Islahiyeh. The range was rugged and, travelling by the old pass, the grades steep and treacherously winding among timbered peaks often fortress guarded. We looked suddenly into the border country, another amazing view. From our summit point of vantage, the road rippled beneath us mile upon mile of it twisting and turning upon itself down a precipitous mountain-side, till the eye was tortured by its confounding rush hither and thither as it poured us out on to a plain full of tearing wind.

7

Our camp was on a rocky ground above the Customs Station among stunted shrubs which provided ample timber for a good fire.

As I lay cold in my blankets I thought of Turkey and all we had seen in it. Certainly, though its methods had been unaccustomed and its red tape irritating, it is a different Turkey from that before the days of the Kjemal regime. There may still be much to do, but it is efficiently policed. The Swiss penal code is in force. The brigands have faded from the main roads. The villages against the background of descriptions written ten years ago are cleanlier. There are schools and compulsory education where there were only a few desultory religious academies before. If there is barbarism in the crack of the sergeant's whip rounding recruits into the troop trains on their way to murder Kurds, there is at least a purpose in the murdering, for the Kurds are themselves mostly confirmed robbers and murderers wherever they are found. If the delays and militarism

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are comically Oriental, the gendarmes are neatly uniformed; the civil police, the Senior force, is in the main a fine body of men comparable with the police of Western Europe in smartness and education, and the nostrils are no longer offended with the stench of hanging corpses in the market places of which travellers had so much to say not so many years ago.

In three years, too, the purdah, which shut women away like domestic animals, and the purchase of female slaves, except in the outlands, has been wiped out.

The country is in a preparative stage for the abandonment of official Moslemism with all its outlook of blighting cruelty, and for the general adoption of a Western viewpoint on religion and morality, combined with an equally Western tolerance. Whether the new order is more picturesque than the old, one does not care to say. Whether the urge towards civilization will persist or whether there will be a relapse into the greasy, handlopping welter of sensual and self-satisfied cupidity and laziness which marked the regime of the old Turk, when the Ghazi goes or tires, time alone will show. He is the only driving force in Turkey to-day. His photograph is in every window. His name is uttered respectfully by all, from the beggar by the roadside to the still-Oriental Vali who governs in the provinces.

Perhaps he will succeed and leave a permanence of cleanliness and progress and a reasonable honesty of administration behind him, sufficient to develop to maturity of its own impetus. He certainly has worked wonders with raw human material which would break the heart of any reformer. At the same time, his own record is far from free of atrocity, which is a strange paradox.

8

One thing only he is unlikely to change in Turkey, and that is the immemorial importance of the donkey.

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Hear him going by, patter, patter, patter in the black Islahyehan dawn, his feet brought down quickly and very close together in order to balance the toppling mountain of man that overshadows his meek and labouring patience. See him, dim in the late darkness above the waving shrubs, five, six, seven of him, one behind the other on the narrow track, tottering along at a fair gait, his ears high held, stiff with effort against the crimsoning dawn cloud, his buckles jingling, his girths creaking under the strain of his enormous, voluble, human burden.

"I said to him," goes an interminable, sibilant Turkish voice, "I said: 'This price is robbery, O Father,' I did. (Whack.) 'Robbery,' I said. (Whack.) 'What of my mother and my mother's mother who is without teeth and must devour soft foods which are not cheap?' I was not afraid of him. (Whack). Wouldn't you have said it, too, brother?" (Whack!)

"It is a hard life for the farmer. We work all day and all night."

"We do. True, brother, we do."

Whack!

Whack! Whack!

Whack!

The descent of a flat piece of board upon the hide of an ass is the clinching of all argument, the supreme applause of popular sentiment, the final expression of all indignation in the Near East. The gentle, ever-working mount of the people throughout all the ages shoulders a heavy cross. In his generations striving follows upon striving. From before dawn till after dark his life is only labour.

No wonder he sometimes brays.

The voices of his riders fade into an indistinct drone. The impact of his battered little hooves is heard no more.

Whack!

Very faint and far, that is the last of him till you

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meet him perhaps bearing mother and child, with gentle husband trudging at his halter with his staff, as though he might be bound for Egypt; or, fat merchant up, when he is hung with blue beads to keep away the Evil Eye and is bitted with a silver bit by way of compensation for his extra burden.

The morning donkey is the most permanent and abiding thing in my memories of Turkey. He is myriad; in most places his name is Transport itself. Without him the people could not live.

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CHAPTER XVIII

PARTANT POUR LA SYRIE

I

"MAINTENANT, Monsieur le Directeur——" began the interpreter.

It appeared that the Customs Director wished to know if I would like a cup of tea. I said I would. It was eight o'clock in the morning, and at that hour, which is usually closed season for Directors, the Bey was doing me honour by being at his post.

He was a tall, slender, elegant young man, with a thin moustache and long nervous hands. He was dressed in yellow cravanette suit. His hair shone with pomade. His nails were pink and polished. He was scented daintily with patchouli and he had a bright, black, beady, distrustful eye which met yours unflinchingly, with complete dishonesty of purpose. Such a man was the head of the Turkish Customs House at the huddle of huts which was Islahiyeh, a cross between Machiavelli and a Roumanian flying officer with a dash of juvenile lead thrown in.

It was pure affectation that he should have an interpreter. I had ample Turkish for customs purposes. He understood French quite well, I think; but it was quite evident that minions were his due as one of nature's favoured, for upon his deal table which, with four kitchen chairs and the usual office appanages of a railway station, completed his furnishing, he boasted an autographed picture of the Ghazi. Heaven alone knows but that Kjemal Pasha could spare it since one day in

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Constantinople when I had a couple of hours at my disposal, I took a census of him in the principal windows and found that he had been photographed, on their evidence, in no less than thirty-seven positions since his elevation to the Presidency. Probably getting photographed, apart from hanging people like Djavid Bey who "went west" last year for belonging to a practically inclined opposition, is the only possible pastime for a President in Angora. Golf has not reached there and speechmaking is tiresome, when it is a foregone conclusion that everybody must agree with you.

In came the interpreter in his spotless white trousers and pipe-clayed shoes, with the tea.

"Ah, monsieur," he murmured ecstatically, "ce Monsieur le Directeur, il est bien gentil!"

The Director rose and bowed over his tea—to me.

"Maintenant . . ." It appeared that he felicitated me on my courage, enterprise, motor-car, good fortune, domestic circumstances, courtesy and personal beauty, and wished me *bon voyage*, good luck, pleasant journey and a safe arrival in my own land to discover that all my friends and relatives were well, that my business had prospered and that my wife was faithful—something like that.

We drank solemnly.

"Maintenant . . ." The interpreter was off again at top speed.

In effect would it cheer me greatly, if the party, which had been cooling its heels outside while I negotiated, were haled in and given tea. They came in and had tea—almost five tablespoonfuls between them. The Director wished them all the good things which he had wished me and some more which he had thought of in the meantime, but made no allusion to the painful fact that a few days before he had fined Knowles for having two bottles of Christian whisky (i.e. as distinguished from Turkish "Policeman Brand"—price 4*s*. a

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bottle—which is a combination, I judge, of strychnine and sal ammoniac) in his railway sleeping berth.

"Now," he said, after an interval, through his intermediary, "I would talk to you privately." The party withdrew, suppressing cheers.

We looked at each other and said a few disjointed words about malaria, and I began to wish earnestly that my papers, which were being completed, would come.

They didn't. The Director continued to sit and gaze at me. He gazed long and lovingly. I gazed at him. Under his smooth elegance, I felt that he was a very nasty piece of work and heaved a sigh of relief that the days of torture had gone. Perhaps he reciprocated. It is easy to misjudge one another in this dim world. After ten minutes he had an inspiration, and the interpreter arrived once more.

Maintenant, had I ever tasted tea scented with attar of roses? I hadn't.

We had it.

After two and a half hours of this kind of courtesy, mitigated by gold-tipped cigarettes six inches long, we were released.

Would we accept the honour of the guard to the border? We would. I felt that we would find it difficult to refuse. The Director insinuated that he believed the district to be strewn with the most abominable risks to the traveller, but I had a painful feeling that he looked on us and not on any possible assailants as the danger. His eyes enjoyed some private joke as we left.

2

The guard came on board. Everybody bowed low. Our flags fluttered. We staggered off down a long valley, full of marshy lands, glorious with blue flowering swamp lilies. Presently we came to a bridge. At least it had been a bridge, but somebody had almost entirely

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destroyed it with dynamite. Many yards of deep water sown with nasty-looking weed filled the interval.

A few yards away was a railway bridge.

"Let's go there," I said, pointing to it.

"Yok! Yok! Yok!" croaked the guard.

"Is there any other way round?"

There wasn't. I seemed to see again the twinkle in the Director's eye when we said good-bye to him.

"All right," I said. "Over the railway bridge we go."

Then, the guard thought that possibly we might cross the stream by going thirty kilometres round. Francis looked at the bridge and said: "Easy!" Both he and I have been across many railway bridges in motor-cars in Australia, and if you keep the right pace for rolling over the sleepers it is not very dangerous unless any of the sleepers are loose. So we ran the car up the embankment, quite light-heartedly.

Several features of this railway had not, however, occurred to us. They and some more had struck both Knowles and the guard who got down and walked carelessly to the other side between the rails as if their motive was merely to stretch their legs.

One of the things we had not reckoned on was that the railway gauge was about equal to the track of the car so that instead of being able to ride with both wheels outside the rails as we did on the 3 ft. 6 in. gauges in Australia, we were compelled to travel with one outside and one inside. As there was only about fifteen inches of timber outside each rail and our tyres were 6·75 inches, this did not allow us much margin of insurance against accidents. Furthermore, the sleepers were a different distance apart from those to which we were accustomed and their tops were rounded.

The experience was one of seconds only, but they were hectic. Francis drove. I mean he held the wheel and bounced, but I think the car mainly drove herself.

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I stood on the footboard, and as the engine began to misfire at the first bump, even-speed driving went to the winds and our iron steed bucked like an outlaw. Each bounce seemed bound to throw us thirty feet into the water, but our only hope of safety lay in keeping going. We both reached the bank literally pallid and sweating, a state to which I have never before seen Francis reduced, and when we had climbed off the embankment, we stopped for a few seconds to get our nerve back.

All the poor escort could do was to turn his eyes to heaven and shout: "Allah! Allah!" Knowles explained to him in English: "I told you they were all right. Railway bridges are nothing to us."

3

Presently we arrived at a white culvert and our escort left us, pointing to the Franco-Syrian post about three-quarters of a mile away. The intervening zone was invested thoroughly with patrols. Bands of armed customs officers vied for possession of the road with villainous-looking gangs of soldiers. I know now where all the ugly-looking men in the Turkish army go—they are sent to the Syrian border.

None of them had the manners and polish of the Director of Customs and we were relieved to see the end of them. They looked at our passports five times in all.

"That's the last," I said. "Here's the border." I pointed to an ostentatiously white bridge.

"Out of Turkey in a second, thank the Lord," shouted Knowles.

A bullet hit the dust beside us and ricochetted over the back of the car with a long whe-hee.

Stop! Francis pulled up like lightning. There was a soldier under a tree about 150 yards away. When I had last noticed him he had been in an attitude of

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peaceful repose, his knees drawn up, his cap over his eyes.

Evidently he had woken up and beheld a large grey, military-looking car populated with equally military-looking villains in khaki, and thinking it was a French invasion, he took a pot shot at us. He now had his rifle up and was taking another. I shouted and blew the horn. To my relief he dropped his gun and came towards us. When he saw we were not a French raiding party he was a very frightened conscript. I told him exactly what I thought of him and he cringed. Then two lazy-looking superiors who had been under another tree came up and were insolent, shrugging their shoulders and trying to laugh the whole matter off and offering no apology. We left Turkey in a thoroughly angry atmosphere and its representatives saw us go with expressions of sneering contempt and some skilful expectoration.

4

None of us are likely to forget the French welcome on the Syrian side. It was Royal. The garrison had seen us shot at and the garrison was not amused. Only the week before a pleasant old colonel who had been visiting them had gone for a walk and the Turks had done the same to him. So France was on its high horse, even before we came, and that small flick of bullet-lifted dust across the culvert had made us blood brothers. Seven non-commissioned officers, white, black and brown after the habit of remote French Colonial forces, came out to meet us. They all stood on one leg at once and shouted objurgation at the Ottoman Republic in which mingled Kurds and Spahis joined with hearty enthusiasm. The excitement even communicated itself to the camels and mules, which, trumpeting and grunting, rushed to the end of their picket ropes and sought to take the air to escape from the racket in a series of panicky leaps.

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Francis especially loved the scene. He felt, as he surveyed the cavorting field of transport animals and the row of the soldiers from La Patrie who spat every time they mentioned our late hosts, that at last we had come into a white man's country. This was the way, he said, that we should have been welcomed everywhere if we had had a proper publicity agent. He did not even resent the futile attempt of a hairy fellow to show his affection for him by osculation.

In the middle of the pandemonium, the guard who had come from Islahiyeh with us, and who had apparently tramped down the line to spend my baksheesh on the Syrian side, fortuitously arrived. His face was beaming with the satisfaction induced by seeing us again and, as he had missed the shooting party, he was rather astonished at his reception, since all official Syria immediately pounced on him as if he had been personally responsible.

We were not long in finding out that the white man's country seemed to be a much more dangerous spot than Turkey. The officer in command insisted not only that we should have an escort, but that he should be the biggest escort to be had—a Kurd and a captain six feet seven high, armed with a long rifle and five belts full of cartridges. Also, he was the gentlest soul who ever walked and he was detailed to take us over the main range to Radjou, which we reached at dusk.

This cheerful spot was a railway station. It was entirely surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by troops. It was almost as hospitable as the border post and its great men were a hardy French lieutenant who had been in Syria for two years and the station-master. This latter was our host. He was a middle-aged man, a cultivated Russian of the old school. Before the revolution he had been a naval captain. He spoke French, German, Norwegian, Tartar, Turkish, Arabic,

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IT RAINS IN SYRIA—SOMETIMES!

THE FRENCH COMMANDANT AND THE RUSSIAN REFUGEE STATION-MASTER AT RADJOU, SYRIA

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Czecho-Slovak and Italian, and wrote English quite well, though he could not speak five words of it.

On the wall of his little station house he had pinned the battered flag of his old ship and the insignia of the order of St. Anne surrounded by a few photographs.

"Those," the poor old fellow told me with tears in his eyes, "are all I have left. They are my mother and my relations to me now. They are old Russia. All the rest—all my dear ones and my ship and my home and my country—they are gone. You think I am childish, perhaps, because I wear my country's uniform still. If all your world were wiped out at a blow, possibly you would treasure the crumbs."

He rose abruptly. "Excuse me," he said a little hoarsely, "I must give some orders." He went out hurriedly and did not come back for a long time. I think he felt being a station-master very keenly. The French said he was a splendid station-master.

Everybody went armed along the road to Aleppo: the farmers at the ploughs; the travellers along the highway; the multifarious Kurdish police, a very smart, efficient-looking force; the passenger whom we took on at Afrine, the junction of the wonderful road which the French have built to the port of Alexandretta with the chaussée highway which runs towards the border.

All this arming and barbed-wire entanglement was most incongruous. North Syria is a fertile place, hilly and rich in soil, with a telegraph line running through it and new towns, smart and well regulated, and large motor-lorries in a tremendous hurry making for the coast.

In such an ordered land all this force seems laughable, but it is said that brigands abound, and, by all accounts, the brigand thereabouts is not a nice man to meet unless you can push at least an automatic under his nose by way of greeting. All the same it felt like going armed to Bathurst or across the Darling Downs.

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However, we were not very long in the danger zone, for by lunch-time we were in Aleppo, our car in a garage, ourselves at the Hôtel Baron, our accumulation of dirty clothes sent to the laundry, our beards trimmed and our hair cut and a statutory holiday of four days declared by old Scrap Iron rather than by myself. That decrepit radiator of hers needed "surgery and stitches" again and, if there had been any chance of getting a new one, I should have given it the old age pension.

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CHAPTER XIX

WITH THE HEIRS OF ASSUR-BANI-PAL

I

ALEPPO, however, was worth the wait. It was once the great trade centre of the Orient, the point where all the caravans of the four winds met, the loading depot for all countries as far as Turkestan. The discovery of the Cape sea route to India ruined it.

The French are seeking to restore its prestige and, even with the few years at their disposal, they have already succeeded in giving it something of the air of their North African colonies. The place looks busy and prosperous as it sits on the flat desert edge with its immensely strong citadel towering over it. It has no very old buildings, for the real East—nothing older than, say, Westminster Abbey, but it has other compensating sights and it is doubtful whether the world, in which colour is dying, can show a city of more variegated hues.

One, naturally, upon coming into Syria looks for some survival of the Assyrians. For a wonder, in this age of changes, you find something that looks like them.

I sought, in Aleppo, for some descendant of Assur-bani-pal, a nice-minded Assyrian King who died in 669 B.C. after a useful life spent in whacking the Elamites and the Egyptians and spoiling Babylonia. I have always loved Assur-bani-pal for his thoroughness. One never found former enemy subjects cluttering up any of his hotels eight years after the war and monopolizing the head waiter, as you do in London and even Paris, for

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the simple reason that when he had finished with them, none of them had any use for a head waiter. Those he did not flay alive to amuse himself on Saturday afternoon (there were no races or electric hares in those days and a man must have diversion) he piled in heaps and burnt or lined up and charged with sword wheeled chariots or did various other things, which the Asiatics say are still in fashion in Siberian Russia.

Sure enough, Assur-bani-pal's descendant was there, sitting on the footpath in the Doghru Yol, with his beard and his conical hat and a garment that might have been cut by Nebuchadnezzar's tailor, and sandals upon very dirty feet. He was so real that I almost expected to see him rise up, take a six-foot bow from behind him, protrude his aldermanic region after the fetching manner of Assyrian bas-reliefs of 2500 years ago and send an arrow winging after those impertinent sightseers, ourselves.

Actually, the ancient Assyrian cap and shirt are still clothing current in Aleppo. Nobody seems to know whether they have persisted through the ages or been recently reintroduced to stimulate the national pride which is really unstimulatable for the simple reason that is doesn't exist.

Those prosperous years before the Cape route to India was discovered, when Aleppo was the clearing house of all the East, dowered the city with so mixed a population that if, even 2000 years ago, there was any really pure Assyrian blood in it, there is none now, and the Syrian himself is an effete half-breed who mitigates his chief occupation of sitting in the shade, with regular daily devotion to that splendid deep breathing exercise known as snoring. I am afraid if a King arose in Carchemish or Antioch or Nineveh to-day and was ordered by the Lord Baal to smite the Elamites, he would let the job out on contract to the Armenians who are the be-all and the end-all of most Aleppan native

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industry, and turn over on his face to continue his dreaming.

2

It is hot in Aleppo with the heat of North-Western Queensland. The sun blazes down at noon, baking the roofs and throwing shadows the colour of Stephens' ink. If you are near the edge of the town, you may watch the antics of heat haze on the flat country towards the Euphrates or the mirage playing at its old game of inundating the landscape with a tantalizing sea of water which is not there.

At midday, only the great cafés, full of fez and hubble-bubble and the scent of Turkish cigarette, are alive, together with the Arab soukhs where, under the arches of acre upon acre of cool, stone-roofed passages, the traders live and bargain as they have done since the Arab world began. Here is the Thousand and One Nights tradition *in excelsis* and when you observe it you know that the colour of the old romance was no myth, but a living thing.

In that cool place of dank alleys redolent of spice and leather, where all the goods of three continents are displayed in little stalls, in these same soukhs gorgeous Armenian, red-fezzed Turk (who here can wear his national headgear with impunity), conical-capped Syrian, smiling Bagdadi, long-robed Arab with silver-hilted dagger, little old English lady tremulous and determined behind a meaty Egyptian guide breathing extortion, jostle each other and give a wide berth to the French officers who mingle with them.

You can buy anything in the soukhs.

You may go to the street of the cooks and have kebab on laurel leaves, and pilau, or to the grocers and have raisins from Smyrna; or bargain for an infinite variety of brass and copper pots in the metal-workers' bay, or for sheep-skin coats in the long, evil-smelling lane

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where you glimpse, through the curtain behind the emporiums, half-naked tanners flaying wet hides. You may clothe yourself in multicoloured silks from head to foot after a few minutes' noisy chaffering. You may go in at one end of the bazaar in a sac suit and come out the other a perfect Sheik or Persian Mirza or Bactrian trader or Port Said Egyptian or old-fashioned Turkish Pasha. You are not limited in your choice of costume, and their bazaar system has the advantage that if you don't like one establishment, its competitor is next door with a greasy proprietor already fixing you with his eye and preparing to go one better than the trader you have left.

This publicity undoubtedly has its advantages. When a hundred stores lie before the customer and each knows what the next is doing, the spirit of emulation makes for real competition.

So, whether you buy a camel, as you can on the outskirts, or instruments pertaining to the art of murder such as a seven-inch dagger, or five grammes of diamond dust, or a pound of Hang Me tea or the "Adventures of Deadwood Dick" in the True Blue series, which is also available, bargaining is the order of the day.

3

Outer Aleppo, dominated by its strong and ancient citadel, wakes only late in the afternoon. Then the Kurd policemen, with their barber's pole batons and black Astrakhan fezzes set off with gorgeous bandings, have a busy time. Aleppo has more motor-cars to the square inch than half the other towns in the East put together, which is due to the excellence of the roads. It also destroys more. Wherefore, it, too, holds the record in motor repair shops. The Sheik of the desert drives with a dashing, mediæval style. Crown wheels and pinions are nothing to him; front axles are bagatelles.

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Ergo, whole streets specialize in radiator repair and nothing else, and there are, on a rough calculation, 167,484 motor drivers and mechanics out of a population of about 200,000. At least, that is what you feel if you traverse the streets at the proper hour. If you choose another proper hour, you make the same estimates regarding barbers, money-changers, butchers and French soldiery.

These latter, of course, are a fierce and brilliant lot and, as a European, one is proud that they manage to outvie the Orient in their splendour. In India when you meet soldiers in these hard times in the middle of summer you will find the officers garbed in fifteen shilling topees and thirty shillings' worth of khaki shirt and shorts. To these they will add golf stockings, brown shoes and, if they are feeling exalted about themselves, a riding crop or cane. In the bands of their topees, if they are Welsh enough, the leek; if Scotch enough, the hackle; otherwise a regimental badge. The rank and file are dressed in the same fashion, except that their outfits are cheaper.

But the Frenchman has other ideas. From the highest to the lowest, his starving country sends him forth to conquer the Eastern world in a state of splendour which makes a prosaic Anglo-Saxon blink. It is not so very long ago that a noted British war correspondent made the welkin of London ring with his denunciation of the extravagant magnificence of the British Commissioner's "Palace" at Bagdad. When I went to call on the British Commissioner there I found his palace a poor thing after the pomp of the Commissary's office in the vilayet of Haleb. Mind you, Haleb is not the capital of French Syria either. Oriental carpets and rugs in rich profusion, sentries with fixed bayonets, saluting myrmidons, endless corridors, burnished arms lavishly displayed and generally a regal atmosphere in which you feel that you are about to be greeted by King Solomon

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and that the Queen of Sheba is just round the corner, are the features of the French Assistant-Governor's menage.

As for the military, whose name is more than legion, their glory is as that of the sunset in the desert.

Their uniforms are sky blue or khaki with red facings. No man is an officer unless he has the strength to carry five pounds of gold braid in a temperature of 112°, and he is no gentleman unless he is shod in boots eighteen inches high and polished like glass.

All day, the French Army passes in a blaze of bright colours, bearded spahi drinking absinthe on the boulevarde; camel corps in khaki with Joseph's coat, turban and trousers so voluminous and pendulous at the knee that they make an American professional golfer's plus fours appear insipid. This attractive uniform is bound at the waistline with a tremendous crimson scarf.

To sit in an open air café and toy with your ice while they go by is a delight to the eye, and if you need subject matter for speculation while you dine at the fashionable Hôtel Baron, you may decide whether the Republic invests every officer who goes to Syria with a hundredweight of medals or whether it will not send a man there unless he has already acquired a hundredweight. Most of them have so many that they wear one set at breakfast, another at *déjeuner* and a third at dinner.

Afterwards, when they go to a café to sip a liqueur and listen to the band or join in the dance (they are so much more modern than Stamboul that "Valencia" replaces "Susie" here) they take them all off, for you never know what may happen in an Aleppan café. Those places, full from 9 a.m. onwards, are a weird mixture of fezzes nodding over hookahs, frock-coats, jibbahs, little boys selling cigarettes and carrying trays of lighted charcoal to re-light your pipe, dispensers of rugs, changers of money, touts, tawdry lady musicians who ogle you in the hope that you will buy them a drink, camelteers,

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A STREET IN ALEPPO

ALEPPAN TAKING HIS PET SHEEP FOR A WALK

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newsboys, and bargaining merchants, full Colonels and even fuller privates who sometimes get put out with a loud crash.

Also, at the right hour there are the sheep, brought in from their ante-prandial parade.

When the stout French major sighs over his drink at the cool hour of five and says: "Ah well, I think I must take my little mutton for a walk," he is not joking. The sheep is the fashionable pet of all strata of society in Aleppo. In the tiers of flats around the streets overlooking the muddy Kuweik River every householder owns a sheep, which he keeps tethered on his small veranda.

A sheep is, ordinarily, a drab sort of animal if you allow him to be, but the Aleppan has a way with him of investing everything about him with a meed of his own glory. Ergo, he takes his pet lamb and dyes its fat tail magenta and its ears green or paints a crimson band round its heart or gives it an orange muzzle after which it is deemed fit to mingle (on the end of a lead) with the gay human medley in the streets. Every afternoon you may see fifty inhabitants strolling with their muttons. The baser sort take a deep interest in vegetable sellers' open stalls and stand gazing at boxes of beans for minutes together, keeping as much as possible between their busy live stock and the stallmen whom they divert with the latest gossip, while their ovine companions divert themselves with stalks.

4

In the atmosphere, it is no wonder that the French rulers are not averse to imitating the purple methods of old Empires. While one may pretend to laugh a little at them, they are right. Their display is purposeful and the Oriental understands it.

Their officers are the finest and hardest products of the Colonial service for all their peacock hues. There

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are not many lounge lizards among them, and go as early as you care to the salle à manger of your hotel and you will find half a dozen of them hastily gobbling the roll and coffee which every Frenchman believes to be an amply sufficient *petit déjeuner* on which to do a hard morning's desert ride.

Actually, there is not a sane-headed British official in the East who would not if he could imitate the French policy of aloof and gilded superiority which makes the rulers of Syria a class of potentates apart from the people they rule. If India could revert to gold and scarlet of which stuffy-minded and muddle-headed Glasgow pedagogues and agitating and impractical Bengalis have robbed it in these past few years, it would be a great step toward guaranteeing the continuity of white civilization and would undoubtedly be more in keeping with the temperament and inclinations of the Indian people than the present one of singing low and handing the country over to the tender mercies of babus, whose chief qualification often is that they have learnt to gabble Macaulay.

Everywhere we met the French in Syria, they were efficient. There was little red tape about them. Their attitude to the British was in strong contrast to that of the bourgeoise and peasantry of Northern France. They were whole-heartedly friendly to the British people and at least tolerant of British Oriental policy. Also, they were inordinately kind and helpful and overpoweringly hospitable.

5

Before we left Aleppo we had a parting. After deep thought I decided that, from here, one member of the party must go to England and carry a full report upon the behaviour of the car. Knowles was the most suitable man for this work. He was himself in the motor business in England. He had had experience of the

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type of foreign car with which England was hoping to compete before he came with us. I was able to assure him that many of the roads in Australia were on all fours with the roads which we had just traversed in Turkey. He was therefore impartially armed to discuss our mechanical difficulties and show how they could be got over. Furthermore, Birtles and I had travelled so far previously together in Australia that we made the best dual combination of the party, if one man was to leave us.

It was a hard thing to ask Knowles to go even for so necessary a service; but, when I did it, he acquiesced at once like the good soldier he was and I saw him off on the Beirut train next morning, a plain khaki figure among twenty compartments full of homing French gold lace.

We achieved a railway station record by being the only two parting friends there, black, brown or white, who did not kiss each other loudly on both cheeks, and it was very lonely for a little while, with his musical cheeriness gone.

He carried out his mission and retired to his home in Yorkshire; so if, any day, you happen to be in the Bradford Club and a rather short, aquiline, pleasant-faced man with a close-clipped moustache and a slight limp from chilblained heels remarks to you testily from a chair: "I say, old man, when is this confounded Government going to do something about income tax?" don't mutter "Poky, stay-at-home Englishman" to yourself, for it will be probably Captain Billy Knowles, easing himself of the sense of injustice which he feels because he is not getting enough wars for his money.

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CHAPTER XX

THE LAND OF SHEIK AND LOCUST

I

ALEPPO is the place where the East begins, the Suez of South Asiatic land travel, and if anybody were to ask me what the real mark of the transition is I should plump for the sign of the shirt. Where you see men wearing the tails of their shirts inside their belts, that is the West. When those tails come outside and flap in the wind, that is the East. The fez isn't a sign; you can see it in restaurants off Piccadilly. Arab robes mean nothing. They may signify that you are in the Orient or merely, when you see them gravely pacing along Rotten Row, that King Feisul is at the Hyde Park Hotel. But no gentleman would walk down Rotten Row or Piccadilly in his shirt-tails. Ergo, when you see a gentleman doing it—beware. This is the city of guile. Therefore, leaving it is not a mere act of departure, but a game calling for a display of deep cunning and much watchfulness.

The particular form of guile which is popular in Syria is connected with the coinage. Ringing the changes, as practised in the best British criminal circles, is merely the elementary commercial method of Aleppo.

To begin with, there are about 132,216 kinds of money current. There are, for instance, the notes of the Banque de Syrie. There are Syrian silver medjidiehs and piastres. Then there are Turkish gold pounds and Turkish silver medjidiehs and piastres. Finally, there is French money

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and Egyptian pounds and piastres, and Turkish paper money of the modern regime, apart from the currency of the many-landed caravans.

Very well, you come to settle accounts. Your petrol supplier or your grocer begins operations by finding out —and it is quite easy in the Orient where everything is known—what sort of money you have. Then he renders his account in some other currency. For instance, if you have Turkish money, he will present your bill in Syrian francs, so that you have to reduce the francs to Syrian piastres and the piastres to Turkish gold piastres and the Turkish gold piastres to paper Turkish pounds which are about one-ninth of the gold,—some process like that.

He will then give you your change in mixed Egyptian 'mejids,' Syrian and Egyptian and Turkish piastres all of which have a different valuation. He allows you to sink well into the morass of calculation through which you will need to wade to make sure that you are not being cheated before he suddenly shouts in an excited voice:

"No, no, effendim" (Turkish is still popular as a language). "No, no, effendim! I have given you wrong. Exchange altered yesterday!"

"Yavash! Yavash!" (Slowly!) you say. "Twenty-seven piastres Egyptian. Now, what the devil is 27 piastres Egyptian in Turk paper piastres?"

The claws of your adversary close on the sorted heaps. He shouts:

"I have done the gentleman an injustice. This is right."

He produces an entirely different combination and the only way to deal with him is to insist that he pays you in your own tender, which he will do, after resistance, with a fresh show of injury.

I had my last chance to practise the Turkish language in Aleppo and the occasion of it was memorable. Our hotel was the best staffed hotel in the world. I mean

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that it had the largest staff for a hotel of its calibre that I had ever seen. It took five people, male and female, to collect one's laundry. It needed three people to wait on one at table. No less than two were ever able to come to tell you that the Post Office was unable to read your handwriting and would you therefore re-write your telegram and give the bearer some more baksheesh for his double journey to Telegraph Bureau?

When we went away, they were naturally sorry and the whole staff was there to watch us go. Seven hairy people came to offer to help with our packing. Five helped me to make a final search of the room in order to be sure that none of the seven had slipped trifles which they fancied under the mattress for future collection. Three more joined us on the stairs, because it was a slack hour of the day when there was nothing else to do. Our numbers were again increased by three outside the office. I went into the writing-room and they followed me in joyously. Some of them gently dusted specks off the furniture. Some of them were perfectly honest. They stood and stared expectantly. I selected two likely-looking delegates and gave them my tips.

Then I started to go, feeling that I had been both rational and just. A hand plucked at my sleeve. "Monsieur, I washed your clothes." "Monsieur, I showed you where the garden was." "Monsieur, have you forgotten me?" "Just a trifle, Monsieur, I am the page. I hung up your hat for you."

It was a very hot day. I had been liberal in my largesse. I was beginning to get annoyed—distinctly annoyed. By the time I had reached the vestibule, I felt clearly that I had a grievance. A fat fellow, whose daily labour on our behalf consisted in standing beside our table at *déjeuner* and looking as if he had espied a cockroach in one of our plates and was waiting eagerly for the delectable moment when we should discover it in our mouths, also had a grievance. He voiced it in

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Turkish, because he would not have expected me to understand. Everybody grinned.

What he said was the kind of thing that no gentleman calls another. It reflected on my ancestry to the time of Adam.

Ordinarily I should have smiled to myself, or chaffed him, but there was a French officer in the vestibule and he seemed to enjoy it. Nobody likes being made a fool of, especially on a hot day, with a bakers' dozen of whining loafers plucking at one's arm.

I wheeled round suddenly on the crowd in an involuntary blaze of wrath.

In my worst Turkish I told them what I thought of them. I said all the things that the station-master had said to his cat when it stole the morning goat's milk at Airange. I expressed the views of a beggar in Adana on the police. I repeated the salient parts of a conversation which I had heard between a small boy at Uru Kushla and a donkey. To say that the crowd shrank back is to put it mildly.

The French officer wearing seven docorations and spurs, who was leaning negligently over the balcony rail, burst into a loud guffaw.

"What the devil are you laughing at, sir?" I demanded, thoroughly incensed at his impertinence.

"Ah, Monsieur, but your accent! It is the accent of the peasant and you do not look like the peasant."

"And, Monsieur, your language!" said the voice of a French girl, whom I had met before and who had arrived on the battlefield unnoticed. "Your language! Oh, la-la! Yai Yai!" She rolled her eyes to heaven in mock horror.

We broke a bottle of wine over it. I had often wondered why people while understanding had smiled when I essayed to speak Turkish. Like most novices I had begun to pride myself on my progress. It now appeared that acquiring the tongue in Anatolia was like going

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to a village in Zummersett or Inverness to learn English. I had the accent and vocabulary of an old yokel. And nobody had been kind enough to tell me.

"Besides," said the fair French maiden whose English was about on a par with my Turkish, "the language with theis 'otel boy, 'ee is no good. You give 'eem the keeck, keeck—the keeck in 'ees neck, then 'ee onderstan."

2

There were quite a number of sheiks in their cars abroad as we went out on the metalled, military road which goes a few miles on the way to Dair el zor, but they all seemed to be going the wrong way. Each one of them waved to us frantically and shouted in Arabic, as if they wished us to turn round and go back.

"Perhaps the brigands are ahead," Francis would say hopefully. He had been thinking of brigands for a long time. He was deeply disappointed that we had not met any and inclined to feel that I had committed an express breach of warranty in not providing them. Brigands mean paragraphs in the paper and more ready sale for your photographs.

I personally did not want to meet any brigands. Neither did I desire the experience which was shortly coming to us. One minute we were bowling along a magnificent highway which looked as if it were bound for the world's end. The next we could smell rain. The next we were at the end of the metal in the middle of a sea, the after effects of a waterspout. As far as the eye could reach there was water. A hundred yards away, road-workers were up to their knees in it, rescuing their wretched belongings from their tents. A village of conical huts, built exactly the shape of the Assyrian national hat, presumably to throw off the rain quickly in just such emergencies as this, sat in the middle of an ocean to our left.

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It was hopeless to try and move, so we camped for the night on the blue metal. Towards dusk more sheiks began to arrive—from the wetter end of the world. You heard them miles away labouring in low gear, and usually, after a tremendous amount of laughable skidding and splashing, they became bogged or else, throwing great spouts of water in the air, doused their distributors. Francis spent the rest of the available daylight helping the Arabians revivify their ignitions. He took keen delight in this pastime. A sheik driver does not suffer gladly in the circumstances. First of all, he tucks all his many clothes and has ten minutes' cranking. Afterwards, he swears long and loud, calling upon his Prophet to aid him. All the other eleven sheiks who are in the poor, rattling Lizzies sit still and give him good advice; or ask him testily, if they are old, how he is going to get them to dry land in time to kneel down and say their prayers at sundown; or simply take out the remains of their lunches and some arak and proceed to enjoy life, until the Lord shall decide to help them out of the mess.

Francis reported that in many cases their cars were so dirty that it was difficult to find their distributors, much less to dry them. And, all night, the plain was lighted by the glare of bogged headlamps and by the giant locust buzz of low gears.

Up betimes, I walked four miles through the mud to make sure that it was safe for us to risk a journey through it, and found at the end of that distance the rainfall cut off along a ruled line. There was a stunted tamarisk bush by the side of the road. One side, its shade fell over sodden bog; the other over parched desert, on which the sun had already begun to beat with a fierce heat.

Thus it happened that, after slipping and sliding amid the hurtling lumps of mud which came aboard, we sat under that very tree half an hour later and had a second breakfast before cleaning the car.

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Within the next hour we were on the Euphrates, and the temperature had changed from that of Western Queensland to something like that of Central Australia when it is really showing what it can do. Towns were few and far apart in this region. When they did appear, they reminded one of the bones of a man left long in the desert at the mercy of the jackals; only a few stringy and dirty pieces of the flesh of old-time greatness that vulture armies had been unable to pick, adhered to their homes. Beside these huddled villages, with names of ancient splendour overlaid by three or four intermediate names, there were khans for the Fording Arabs who came over the peculiarly steep and deceptive little hills with a shout and a shriek of horn and reappeared several miles on, with all the passengers jostling each other for a share of some limited shade; while their harassed mechanic, grimed and sad looking, removed his back axle or took a couple of tyres off. Out of seven Fords which passed us early in the morning, we saw no less than five under repair later in the day on a road which was not really bad. But, if they will load 2½ tons on poor Lizzie, what can they expect?

3

As for the Euphrates it is strange the romance that hangs about that great river. I have noticed since I returned to real civilization that you can talk about the Danube and people are mildly interested; you can describe the Indus, which is really the father among Asiatic rivers, and they yawn. But mention the Euphrates and everybody is enthralled. The Euphrates is not romantic to look at even when you see it in a temperature of 112° with a heat haze hanging over it and a black wall of dust and thunder gathering in the east.

It is one of the most leisurely streams in the world. It is broad; all the way, it is broad. It is yellow, with

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OUR CAR WITH AN ARAB FORD
Note the loading on the Ford

THE CHEERFUL LANDSCAPE OF THE EUPHRATES

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a tint of grey in it which seems to speak of turbulence higher up. The water which you see in the morning looks as if it has passed a riotous night before it reached you. It is shallow in most places, wherefore it carries none of the traffic which you might expect on the bosom of waters conceived on so noble a scale. Furthermore, it is not one of those streams with which you can be familiar lying full length and drinking from it.

To lie on the bank of the Euphrates and drink from it, you would in most places need to be twenty-nine feet long and have toes with hooks on the end of them; for it has built up banks, just so deep, of soft silt, which it unceasingly undermines and takes back into itself a few tons at a time, with a dull "womp" that sounds like noontide blasting several miles away.

We ran beside Old Father Euphrates for nearly five hundred miles and except that the flats lower down, after he had made easting from Abu Kemal to Ana and turned the corner to the south again, became wider and the smear of green along his banks in places more marked, his attendant scenery marched with him in unchanging reliability.

You climbed over little, stony hills in the blaze of the morning and there was the river winding in graceful bends across a broad plain, walled in with cliffs which were the ancient banks of the stream, and carpeted with nubbly salt bush and tamarisk, just touched with green near the river side.

Through a pass in the cliff you would negotiate more little hills, a broad wadi, a rocky, barren, treeless burnt-out gully with no life in it but a furtive snake or an angry jackal or an old gentleman on a donkey, most strangely leading twenty camels on a string held in his left hand and too occupied with the perturbation of his mount and team to express his indignation. Another flat, with a few graves on it, marking the site of a fight between French military police and brigands or the limit of endur-

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ance of the members of the great Armenian exodus which a few years ago the Turks sent tramping down towards Babylon. Also, more smellful, open pits full of millions of dead locusts.

To your left again the river, sweeping in its endless curves. You lunch on its banks under the shadow of a khan wall. Hot! It is good training for the next world. A native with the face of a Christ out of one of the old Italian masters and with a round Bagdad sore on the chest of a beautifully proportioned body bare to the waist, slinks up and sits on his haunches at a respectful distance. As you cast away the tins which contain your meal, he retrieves them with the silly pounce of a pi dog after a thrown scrap and sits fondling them, a beautiful, vacant-faced human, who says nothing and wakes some queer twist in you that imbues you with a half-savage desire to throw a stone at him. For his own sake you take your eyes off him and study the scenery through half-closed lids.

The water in the river keeps exactly the same pace. No traffic sits upon it except a lonely Bobus, one of those round boats which are peculiar to the rivers of the Middle East, exactly the shape of the old British coracle but more substantial, one would say. A cluster of palms grows on the other side and near it is a water-wheel hung with tins which pick up the water and pour it in dribs and drabs into a high stone aqueduct which disappears into a shimmering desert. To the right of the palms is a burnt-out rocky hill and a crumbling village which, like the coral islands of the Pacific, appears to be sitting on a band of blue sky, thanks to the habit of the mirage; a playful illusion without which these regions would be dread indeed.

Wop! wop! wop! go the locusts against the khan wall.

"Come on, Frank! Time to move!"

"O-r-r-r-h!"

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4

On again. It is my turn to sleep. The hills fly the yellow fire-flags of the heat haze. The sparse but interminable salt bush wilts. The locusts now come hurtling into the car, forcing you to wear your triplex goggles. Where they strike your face they bruise, for they are coming head on. Over the hill, across the wadi, is another hill, and over the other hill is—the river. And at the river you get down, tie all your ropes together and treading very tenderly on the unsafe bank, lower a bucket five fathoms and fill your radiator which leaks itself empty every half an hour. Up a pass and across another wadi and over the wadi and another hill—it goes on hour after hour. There it is for the fortieth time—the Euphrates with its reliable sweep of dull yellow and its old date palms and its khan and its graveyard and its water-wheels, all over again.

On the second day of this there were mitigations. Dair el zor, the French midway post from which a fine earth road, kilometre posted, runs all the way to the border at Abu Kemal. It is a hot town in which the white-garbed soldiers swelter in their uniforms and yearn for the good old days of a year or two ago when fewer of the really ill-intentioned Bedouins were underground.

Over most of the flats below the town the natural track is smooth, flat silt on which almost any speed would be possible with a racing car and near sundown there is, beyond the post of Saliyeh, a ruin which in majesty excelled anything we saw on the whole of our travels. I think it was old Saliyeh, but it adds to the ghostliness of my memory of it that nobody seemed to know anything about it and one afterwards had the feeling that it might have been part of a dream. It stood on an eminence. From without, it showed the approaching traveller beetling walls, four square, built of huge stones

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lavishly mortared. It would have dwarfed the Tower of London or any castle that I know in England. It would have made the walls of York or even Byzantium look easy to a siege force. Yet inside, it was a shell, empty except for one solitary old traveller who preferred the stinking heat of the enclosure to the desert. From its topmost point, in what might have been the main thoroughfare and was still the main road, you saw across the long shadows of evening the river, wide and silver at your feet. It was a haunt of the lion and the lizard, without a doubt. You do not understand the words of Omar till you have stood in a place like this.

5

We came to Abu Kemal in the moonlight and camped beyond.

A guide took us over the border of Iraq and left us, telling us that we would come to water in a quarter of an hour. We did nothing of the kind, but camped under compulsion, having exhausted even our eight-gallon reserve in getting through to the lively border station and, in the morning, were compelled to drive for a quarter of an hour, with a virtually empty radiator, to reach the Euphrates.

Overnight we had arrived in the heart of Bedouin Land. Everywhere from now onwards were the long black tents of the tribes and their endless camels. Though the local urban Mesopotamian has taken to the Ford, the tribes still follow the old fashion, and the caravan of yore has not altogether died, though the petrol vehicles are pushing their way even beyond the shores of the Caspian.

While we were searching for water, that first morning in Iraq, I visited a *ménage* which was resting on the hillside. Its centre was a long black marquee looking in

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VISITORS IN THE DESERT

ARAB VISITORS

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the distance as if a circus tent, dipped in rusty ink, had been erected without its sides. Part of the marquee had been divided into rooms with thick rugs.

In the centre of the open part, a round depression had been cut in which there was an immense charcoal fire on which sat many cooking pots. All around on rich carpets, their bright saddle-rugs beside them, were the travellers. Their richly tooled and studded saddles and bridles lay carelessly thrown about. Their dagger-hilts were jewelled; their bits sometimes silver; the barrels of their long jezails were chased and the stocks inlaid with labour that must have cost months of time. They had their two hundred camels picketed and beyond their lines and those of their many wiry arab horses, the tents of their servants, black negro and moonfaced Tartar, were set up.

Out on their hill-side their flocks grazed.

The men of the marquee looked at me hawk-eyed and stern. A good place to be murdered on a dark night, I thought uneasily.

"Well, young feller me lad, and what can we do for you?" said the sternest and youngest of the black beards, a man about forty-five years old. "What can we do for you, eh?"

"Great snakes!"

"I thought that would fetch you. I've just been betting old Achmed here that you were British. I knew it the moment I spotted you coming up the hill. You're worth a new pony to me—if the old blighter pays up."

"You've been in England, I see?"

"I have. Balliol. Inner Temple. How's the old Regent Palace? Squattez-vous and tell me all about it and have a wee drappie."

"Too early for me."

"Too early? Sun's always over the yardarm here! It's a rotten climate. I'd sooner spend Christmas in

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Wigan, any day. You haven't got a fag concealed in your bags, have you?"

Over arak, he told me all about himself. His father was a sheik. He had fought with the Hedjaz troops. He was trading with this caravan to Turkestan and they were two years out and resting their animals. He had been three years at the University and he would like to see Piccadilly again. He went "home" (i.e. to London) every few years. What was the name of the waitress in the saloon bar of the Old Punch Tavern in Fleet Street, these days, and had I ever had a sole there? Was it Julie? Well; if it was, I was to give her his love when I got back.

An ancient and lordly person in flowing Arab robes interrupted us at this juncture to present me with a bucketful of curdled camel's milk.

"You'll have to take the damn stuff," said my friend. "But it isn't exactly 'mild and bitter,' and I'd advise you to heave it into the Euphrates when you get round the corner or you'll have tummy-ache to-morrow."

"I thought it made you live to be a hundred?"

"It doesn't. You take my word for it, it is responsible for more infant mortality than all the whisky in the world. It's a foul liquid. Cheerio, old thing. Don't forget about Julie! Give my love to the boys in Bagdad."

I left him sitting among his grave, silent companions, looking so sheik-like that I wondered whether I had been dreaming. I noticed, as I went, that he had a hubble-bubble beside him, but he seemed to be enjoying my cigarette with all the gusto of an Indian major who has achieved the right Port.

We were most of that day at El Khaim, the first Irakian post—naturally mending our radiator. We did it thoroughly this time. We took the whole contraption off and mounted it on the side members with brackets set on valve springs, and I spent several hours with a

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soldering iron patching the bottom with brass coffee mill and whatever other suitable metal I could rape from our equipment. From then onwards our radiator trouble was only intermittent. The worst of it was over.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE CITY OF HAROUN AL-RASCHID

I

THERE are lots of people in Bagdad and out of Bagdad who will tell you that the days of Haroun al-Raschid are gone; that the only monument to them is the tomb of the Lady Zobeide who might have saved herself quite a lot of trouble by dying earlier.

"How," they will ask you, "can the customs of Mohammed survive when the local Arab gentleman has taken to wearing a forage cap and calling himself 'effendi'; when he takes his whisky like a man at hotels called the Maude and the Waverley; when the Anglo-Persian Oil Company has one of its headquarters in the heart of his lair; when the successor of the Caliphs, King Feisul, serves lemonade to diplomats at banquets?"

They say the whole town is dotted with British soldiers, air force lorries, sporting dogs, Fords, bars for non-commissioned officers, soda fountains and newspaper shops where the "Times" and "Boxing" rub shoulders. Where are your Barmecides?

When we had sizzled through Ana (on the banks of the Euphrates), which claims to be the longest village in the world; when we had watched hundreds of frantic Mesopotamians flapping their washtowels (and failing the possession of those useful cloths, their shirts) in a frantic attempt to scare away the locust cloud from their grain fields; when we had passed unnumbered waterwheels and taken dozens of salutes from the trim red

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and khaki garbed native police patrolling smartly with their rifles; seen Hit and Ramadi and slept a night in a graveyard sadly disturbing the jackals, we viewed Bagdad for ourselves.

The first impression I formed was that the clubmen were right. The names of British generals were everywhere; attached to hotels and garages and streets. British flowers blew in gardens under waving green palm trees. The main thoroughfares were wide. And staring us in the face at every corner was the contents bill of a London Sunday newspaper, which bore in large, black capital letters the anguished words:

"CONDEMNED MAN'S WAIL FROM CELL."

Who would expect to find Abou Hassan the wag in such company? Yet when we were established in the cool Persian House of Mr. Rice, the Manager of Anglo-Persian Company, and had bathed, and breakfasted on English food, and been generally pampered and overwhelmed with hospitality, the very first person I noticed was Abou Hassan himself waggishly strolling down the middle of the footpath to the supreme inconvenience of everybody, with a kadi beside him and seven donkeys, with embroidered saddle-bags that might well have been magic ones, for a background. It is true that he had modernized himself to a certain extent. Though he wore a yellow robe, he was wheeling a handcart which had Dunlop aeroplane wheels that undoubtedly came from Birmingham, and a pair of military boots, which he certainly had not adopted for comfort, decorated his feet.

2

While I was staring at him, Khalifa the fisherman went by, nets and all—smoking a woodbine with great gusto. Then Sinbad the porter came along.

All through Asia the porter is an established institu-

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tion. No perfect gentleman ever carries anything in the East. If you buy two tins of benzine in a jostling bazaar, a porter will be at your elbow to throw them over his peculiar saddle and bear them a mile or two for a few piastres or annas or whatever the smallest denomination of the local coinage happens to be. No load ever daunts him. He is bred to be a beast of burden, and a beast of burden he is.

Wherever you go beyond Suez, the road is full of porters—spindly, shank-and-bone little men who look as if they would be incapable of carrying a grasshopper which had eaten much grass, yet cheerfully bowing their shoulders under loads one glance at which would send the whole of the Australian Wharf-lumpers' Union off into a long stop-work meeting. You can hear him crack as he raises it from the ground in his own inimitable way. You look back at intervals with cold fear in your heart that you will see a large bale resting on the ground with the mingled pulp and blood leaking slowly from under it, but those palpitating legs are still ambling forward at a pace almost equal to your own.

In the East usually, the big man does not labour. Almost invariably from time immemorial he has made his living either by looking magnificent as a profession, that is by lying under a tree and making his wife keep him; or, if his opportunities are more expansive, by going into politics or embracing some other occupation in which he can force the other man to work. Ergo, the rickshaw man and the porter and the labourer (who is all too often of the feminine gender) is small and skinny and wistful.

Only Sinbad the porter of Bagdad is an exception to this rule. He is a Kurd, usually about six feet five high, and he sports a huge moustache in the middle of a forbidding countenance.

He has been a feature of Bagdad as long as the black-bearded, shaven-headed old fellows who frequent the street of the silversmiths and the crowd upon crowd of

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merchants who line the footpaths cross-legged on cane sofas and lounges, smoking their hookahs, sitting "in receipt of custom." He scorns small loads—those he leaves to the little, yellow, basket-carrying coolie boys. No ladies' shopping parcels for Sinbad the Kurd. Give him the six-cylinder Fiat motor engine which I saw him carrying or six tins of benzine lashed on a board and he frisks around like a young lamb in spring, bumping into everybody, discommoding the donkey teams in the narrow alleys and knocking corners alike off the streets and the obstructing population.

If, however, you would see him at his best, you must not become angry or grow inclined to physical argument with him. If you attempt this latter he will drop his bundle with a loud howl of fear and anguish and become a miserable, shrinking whining wretch like any other poor devil of a beast of burden. Allah, when he gave the Kurd porters so much muscle, had no room left to fit in the courage.

3

Yes, all the heirs of the "Arabian Nights" characters still flourish in Bagdad. Some of them have disguised themselves in the semi-military dress of the new generation of effendis. A good many have degenerated as you will become apprised if you read the newspaper reports of "rousing speech by the Sheik ul Hubble Bubble" in the new Iraq Parliament. A few have ruined their complexions and their reputations with courses of Paris and champagne, and quite a number, under the guidance and direction of Sergeant Whatsisname, who is a power in the land, have grown into very efficient policemen.

Behind all their masquerading, however, you recognize them just the same.

The most prolific of them are the sons of Abou Mohammed the Lazy, who, on the basis of the soundest sort of evidence, one's own eyes, married many wives of assorted

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colours and has produced a variegated flock which, to the last man, is astonishingly competent at sleeping under a palm tree. When there is no palm tree (though they seem to prefer one), anywhere else will do. They can sleep almost equally as well on the steps of the gorgeous mosque with its blue and green variegated dome, the most beautiful thing in Mesopotamia; or on one of the two boat bridges across the Tigris; or in a gharri or a barber's shop or a bank; or under the lee of a mud wall or on top of it; even on a camel the true Bagdadi can and does relapse into a gentle slumber. And, as you soon discover when you come to deal with the Government offices, he has learnt the art of working with his whole consciousness wrapped away from the realities of life in the fluffy cotton wool of a daydream.

The King and his sheiks believe that they are the Government of Iraq. Some of the very young British officials who have only been out three months believe that England controls the situation, but actually the ruling class is an aristocracy of caste made up exclusively of the offspring of Abou Mohammed. Their influence, of course, is purely negative. Rest, as it is understood by Europeans, would be regarded by them as hard work. It is they who have made the new Civil Service an inert, listless, whispering thing wherever there is not a British goad urging it to effort. It is they who are responsible for the continued barrenness and wastage of the amazingly fertile silt lands along the two great Mesopotamian rivers, which once produced so prodigally as to support Babylon and Nineveh, perhaps the only two cities which ancient history ever knew comparable in size to the great capitals of modernity.

Of course, most modernists and reformers desire that all Arabs, Asiatics and Pacific natives who are given to lying on their backs and making a day's work out of watching the birds, or sitting on a donkey, watching a blowfly playing round its ears, or lounging on a coral

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reef doing nothing whatever, should have thorough elementary educations so that they will disown Abou Mohammed and burn to emulate Henry Ford. But, as one looks at them, one is prone to wonder whether they are not the wiser. At any rate, when they are not sleeping they are mostly singing like children in sheer enjoyment of their own sloth. I know about a thousand captains of industry who have four meals per diem more than my friends of the Garden of Eden, each meal being about a week's rations for a Bagdadi of the baser sort, as well as houses, motor-cars, votes, factories, wireless sets, wives—official and unofficial—and always a bottle in the cupboard to celebrate occasions. I have never heard one of them carolling in a main street at five in the afternoon. On the other hand your allegedly poor, down-trodden Oriental peasant will sing at any old hour in public places if the fit takes him, with the voice of one who has not a responsibility in the world. Anyway, the climate of most of Southern Asia is enough to make anybody lazy.

In Bagdad its effects are such that in summer all business begins at 6 a.m. in European houses, and, with a break for breakfast at about nine, continues till 1.30 p.m., when it finishes for the day.

Iraq is not the only territory that has learnt this wrinkle and some of our Pacific possessions might well copy it with good results—the New Guinea Mandated Territory, for instance. It would give the white population more time for poker, which now has to be crowded into the hours of darkness.

In the afternoon, most Europeans with sound sense take off their shoes and join the Abou Mohammeds with such enthusiasm and regularity that I felt as if I were performing an act of cruelty when I announced that I proposed leaving the city of the Barmecides at 3 p.m., one afternoon.

Garage men had to be routed from their sleep and,

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as we passed through the lanes, numerous somnolent people under the shelter of mud walls rose hesitatingly as if they were saying to themselves:

"Now, is it worth while getting up or shall I let myself be run over? Oh, well, I suppose these confounded new Indianized police would arrest the poor fellows if they killed me, so here goes!" Whereupon, they would pull their legs into safety with protest written all over their countenances.

4

I had hoped to make Khanikin that night out from the capital, but I had reckoned without my brigands. In every country from Hungary onwards, I had been told about the brigands of the next land ahead, but experience proved that the only States in South-Western Asia which treat their brigands seriously are Iraq and India. Jugo-Slavia accuses Bulgaria of having a fine crop, but Bulgaria has never heard of them. It has heard, though, of the Turkish ones who appear to have all joined the Civil Service or gone into the benzine trade. The Turks themselves have fearsome tales about Syria, and the Syrians, while admitting that there are plenty of places where one may be shot up, declare that their villains are Turkish educated. Bagdad, however, apparently has good reason to regard its highwaymen with respect.

The local officials have not been immune. There had been one case a few weeks before we arrived in which a man had been taken out of his motor-car and carefully tied up while the gang held an earnest debate as to whether it would be better to cut his throat or let him go. In the end, they let him go. Another lot, operating on our road to the Persian border, also allowed the local doctor to go home—in pink—and it was said that he was very much annoyed about it.

One of the results of all this was that when we arrived at Shararabad, which possessed a walled police fort, the

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native police officer turned sickly grey at the thought of our proceeding at night, and intimated that if we left so much as our noses sticking outside the high *pisé* wall of his fort, the ill-disposed persons who inhabited the village nearby would probably steal the skin off the end of them. As the car could not be got inside, he put an armed guard on it, and so little trust did he have in his neighbours that he made a hullabaloo when I strolled a hundred yards away from shelter to get a better view of the sunset. I fancy from later information the police grossly exaggerated the danger.

In the morning I was awakened by a loud bang a few yards from my bed and looked round to see the whole of the smart lot of tall fellows who formed the garrison with smoking rifles. Francis, who had got up a little earlier and was outside attending to the car, came in so hurriedly that I imagined he thought they had shot me. I, for the moment, in my half-dazed state, rose with a flying leap under the impression that the brigands had arrived, but it was only a cobra hunt, which gave us a few exciting moments in an otherwise lazy, restful day, most of which we spent at Khanikin as guests of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

An Anglo-Persian Oil Company bungalow in these regions is like the old-fashioned Australian station. It is Liberty Hall with a vengeance. It is always full of wayfarers who have announced themselves by telegram and casuals on the way "home" to leave who haven't, and there are inevitably a few agents and oil diviners and political officers hovering round who "drop in," and after the free and easy manner of the Anglo-Persian exile, casually order breakfast or whatever meal is just finished.

This particular bungalow lay at the end of a street which was wide enough for one vehicle and behaved, during its progress to its destination, like a hastily levanting snake which has parts of himself round several different corners at once.

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Once there, a large Persian mud house faced on to a yard. On the other side, its windows opened straight above the river which runs through the heart of Khanikin, from the gently sloping sandy banks, of which little boys, stark naked, popped in and out of the waters which came down with a rush between the interstices of a graceful Arab stone bridge set against a lovely background of unbelievably green palms and smoky grey hills. It was an interesting view and the bridge had its romance. According to superstition, a certain young lady of Khanikin told an ardent lover that if he built a bridge across the stream she would marry him. Manlike he built it; womanlike, she jilted him. But, as with all good romances, there was something wrong with the authenticity of the tale.

In the first place, stone-cold history allows the bridge only a modern origin. In the second place, Khanikin even yet lives in an age where Father is the dispenser of daughters (for the usual consideration). We debated this matter rather lazily and cynically during the afternoon with a political officer and another visitor who accounted for the flow of strange but essentially useful oaths with which he seeded his conversation, by the fact that he had a brother connected in some way with the Australian Commonwealth Parliament House staff.

On adjourning to the roof, which, like that of all the houses hereabouts, was flat, and having met the household storks, I passed a resolution all by myself that, facts notwithstanding, the romance must be true. It should have been even if it were not. Viewed with Father and Mother Stork placidly standing each on one leg over their nests on the unprotected corner of the roof, the landscape was more than ever entrancing. On the other roofs nearby, other storks were regarding the scenery with a stolid but serene solemnity. The natives, hereabouts, name them Hajji Lak Lak—Hajji being a very holy man who has become important through

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HAJJI LAK LAK, THE STORK IS VERY BUSY IN PERSIA

DRYING CARPET WOOL IN PERSIA

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having been to Mecca and thus acquired a right to dye his beard red with henna, 'lak lak' because that is a slang term for a long, serious, cadaverous person. They were very fascinating birds and I had often before spent half an hour spellbound and wondering how anything of flesh and blood, especially when it is able to catch and gobble with such rapacity, can maintain their hour-long marble immobility, when they are guarding eggs.

Before we left the next morning, I climbed again to say good-bye to this couple. They were in exactly the same state of rigor as the previous evening and all their nesting companions on the other roofs were equally immobile and unconcerned, despite the fact that most of Khanikin, which sleeps on the top of its houses for coolness, was folding up its beds and scolding its children and putting on its shirt in preparation for another luxurious day of sloth.

5

From Khanikin you see the Persian hills. They are unimposing and bare. The more distant ones might match with some of the lower Australian mountains or some of the English greater ones, but there is nothing to tell you that within a couple of hundred miles you will have left the smiting furnace-heat of the plains and be watching a teamster eating snow on the top of the Azdabad Pass. While you are speculating as to where the snow passes may lie, you come to the border, Iraq Post and Persian Post separated by a few businesslike foothills which used to be considered convenient by the brigands as a rabbit warren to escape into after they had raped a caravan.

The Iraq Post was busy, but its chargé d'affaires, a large and jovial Civil Servant, one Mirza Ali, was not too occupied to ask us to add to his museum of photographs of travellers across the border which almost completely covered his walls.

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The Persian border official was busy in another way. His *ménage* was one of the most discouraging-looking outfits man could conceive. The building in which he was housed was low and flat outside, while in the heat before it stood restless packteams of mules and ponies all jumbled up with Fords and motor-lorries and camels jostling each other, what time their drivers cursed the fair land of Persia and each other and the rather disreputable Persian customs officials. Black fez and dusty white turban quarrelled merrily and inside, everybody seemed to be in complete disorder until one's eye sorted the situation out, when it proved that they were all getting through their work with expedition. We ourselves certainly had nothing to complain of.

The French-speaking official in charge said: "Customs? Oh, yes, I have heard of you from the Tehran authorities."

He handed a blank sheet of paper across the table to me.

"Please write me your personal guarantee that if your car is burnt you will pay the Persian Customs 600 krans."

"That won't be much use to you if I get killed."

"All I need, sir," said the customs official, "is your word as an Englishman. If you die your relatives will undoubtedly pay."

"Well, you had better read it over and see that it is satisfactory."

"I am sorry; unfortunately I do not read English well. I must take your word for what you have written."

Evidently, even though England was forced to drive the Germans out of Persia by invasion with the Dunsterville force, her prestige is high in that queer country whose official language is French, though its own language is itself the French of the East and the official tongue of many Indian native States.

As we crossed the border, we learnt the reason for the heavy traffic which appeared to be banked up on either side of it like flood waters along a levee. The

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pilgrims were on the move for Mecca. From all parts of the East, not to say of the world, they were travelling in the blazing spring heat by land and sea, as their need drove them. Kasr-i-shirin, the border town, was full of them—rather entertainingly full, since at this point the two great sects of the Mohammedanism and some lesser ones appeared to have met territorially.

The quarrel between the Sunnite and Shiite sects is not a new one. It began about twelve hundred years ago over the right of Mohammed's relatives to divine succession in the Caliphate (the Caliphs, of course, being the heirs of the Prophet to the headship of the religion which he founded). The Sunnites denied it and the Shiites supported it. For a Sunnite to voice his views in some parts of Asia was, until quite recently, about as safe as for a Cork Irishman to walk the streets of Derry shouting "Up with the Pope," and trailing his coat-tails in the dust. Therefore, Sunnite and Shiite do not greet each other with even outward cordiality, if they are true to their sects.

Their difference was most fortunate for England during the war, because the German propagandists, agents of "Hajji Wilhelm" of Berlin, who otherwise might have done harm of immense extent, were saddled with the inconvenient necessity of being Sunnites in some places and Shiites in others; which was horribly awkward for some of them when they were found out.

However, here were all the Shiites (and a few Sunnites) with their household belongings being packed for transport in motor-lorries. Some of these vehicles were also carrying large loads of benzine; some were long buses with a double row of seats with strong wire netting instead of walls to prevent the mess of pilgrims inside from bursting into the open air and falling upon the road. Why the seats were there none could say, because there was no room to sit on them.

Mr. Ryan, a reddish man about thirty, was ushering

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his passengers to their places or, to use his more apt expression, "packing" them. It was evident that Mr. Ryan did not speak any Persian, and none of either the Sunnites or the Shiites had any English, which seemed to be a splendid arrangement for everybody, since nobody could effectually argue. While I was lazily amusing myself as we waited for some Persian money, turning over in my own mind whether Mr. Ryan himself was a Shiite or a Sunnite—i.e. whether he adhered to Rome or was of the Methodist branch of the Ryans—an inward debate which followed logically on an effort to distinguish between the Mohammedans, I heard him say in his quiet voice:

"Now, move up, will you? Now go on, do you think you've bought the whole bus? Go on, squeeze up!"

He pushed violently upon the struggling mass which was trying to arrange itself and its sleeping rugs, bags, pots, pans, umbrellas and other paraphernalia.

"Squeeze or I'll knock you! Dinkum, I will."

Immediately the memory of a strange rumour which I had heard in Khanikin came back to me.

"Hullo, Aussie. Where did you hail from?"

"Born in Redfern, lived in Coogee," said Mr. Ryan laconically, still moulding his passengers. "Now, I'm telling you! You stay where I've put you or I'll knock you! Too right, I will."

The bearded old fellow whom he was kneading into position "stayed put." He looked as if he thought it safer, whereupon our fellow-countryman had time for conversation. He was not excited at seeing us—perhaps he had seen too much in his short life to be excited about anything. Possibly, too, we were not exciting. We, however, were excited at seeing him, especially Francis, who had long ago come to the conclusion that the Australians are the only white men on earth. Mr. Ryan had come out here to the war and had remained here. It was a good enough pozzie he said, though he could do

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with a surf on Saturdays and sometimes he thought of going back home. But how, he demanded, was a man to pick up, in Sydney, the fifteen to twenty quid a week that he was earning on the Persian border in the interests of the oil industry and the great Mohammedan religion? Would we tell him that?

"Go into politics," I suggested.

"Urr-h," grunted Mr. Ryan. "Well, now everything is jake with the menagerie. I suppose I must be getting." His engine roared casually on three cylinders. His unwieldy vehicle gave a heave. Such of his devout and patient cargo as had room to bend threatened to break in halves with the impact of his first plunge towards Mecca.

"So long, digger! Have one for me at the Barley-mow!"

The other drivers told us he was a good sort.

"Of course," they said, "he hasn't learnt the language like the rest of us and he only has a second-class driver's licence because you can't get a first-class unless you've been through a Persian motoring school. But he gets there all right, and drive, my Lord! How he can drive!"

Stowing about twelve pounds weight of enormous silver tomans and enough notes to paper the county of Cumberland into my breeches, what time Francis looked on gleefully at my struggles, we went to the inner Persian barrier where already a number of Kermanshah-bound Fords were lined up. In a few minutes we were racing them towards the heart of the ancient and romantic land of Iran.

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CHAPTER XXII

IN THE LAND OF OMAR

I

IT is singular how much difference a mere national line drawn across a map may make to the character of the country.

On one side of the Persian border the country-side is distinctly Mesopotamian. The costume is, in main essentials, Arabian among the old-fashioned, and post-war Irakian among the new. The landscape has the features which have distinguished it since the days of Nitocris.

Through the barrier everything changes. Types which you have hitherto seen only as odd travellers, in black Astrakhan headgear or in real Persian costume, potter about in rich profusion. There is not the brilliant show of colour in Persia that there is in Aleppo or Bagdad. The Persian believes in more sombre hues. He wears on top, usually, unless he is a Kurd or an old-fashioned Parsi or one of the turbaned tribes, a round black or earth-coloured fez which is the shape of a witches' cauldron without the rim at the neck. Below this, he has bobbed hair and a confusion of garments, according to the coldness of the region he is in, the whole basis of which, in any case, is a blue dungaree tunic and a pair of Oxford bags made the wrong way upwards of the same material. Anchored at the ankles, in the interests of decency and warmth, they have a loose, flowing effect above and below them are turned-up shoes.

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The Persian shoe is a wonder in itself. Its upper part is made of a tough, twilled white cloth and it has a thick, blue-green sole. At first glance you would imagine that this is of mineralized leather, but on closer acquaintance it turns out to be constructed of innumerable strips of treated cloth, so packed together that the surface looks like a solid piece of smooth material. The heel and toe are protected with horn guards, and I can testify from experience that even the cheaper sort are as substantial and wear just as well as an ordinary leather boot and that, wearing them, one is a good deal more comfortable and sure-footed.

The Persian is a queer fellow. He is dirtier than the Turk. Even the better-class Persian believes that to have more than one shave a week is luxury. His clothes among the lower classes are shabbier, but as the Turk has been Europeanized a year ago and compelled to acquire new costumes and the Persian has, no doubt, had his wardrobe for a good many years, it is possibly unfair to judge between them. He looks as if he had dressed to make himself humorous with his unshaven face or stubby, often red beard with the grey or black edges forming a halo between his skin and the dye. He wears a perpetual smile. He lies about less in the shade than the Bagdadi, and you are apt to say when you see him, whether as a Mede along the Alvand Range or an old-fashioned Iranian further east, that he is an easy-going fellow as loose in his habits as in his language, which, colloquially, has less grammar than any other tongue in the world except Chinese, and is as simple to learn in its elementary form as Esperanto—in some ways far simpler to the Oriental. You see the Mede to best advantage in Hamadan, which is one of the oldest living cities in the world, a capital to which Semiramis gave a water supply and in which Darius and Xerxes flourished; in which Alexander the Great held many a debauch; from the walls of whose temple of Æna,

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Antiochus the Great retrieved the last gold bricks and silver tiles.

You might expect to find the Persian there a proud fellow bolstered with much tradition and many precedents of conduct. However, you ask him in vain, it is said, for any legends of the ancient greatness when Medea was the centre of the force which overthrew Babylon and laid the shadow of its dominion over all the lands from the Ægean to the Afghan border of to-day. The few stories that have survived locally are of Alexander the Great, whom they call Iskander and of his frequent and glorious sprees. The Persian never forgets a spree. Otherwise, so far from remembering the great things of old time, the citizen of to-day cannot even read any one of the references to Ecbatana written in B.C., many of which, descriptive of the lie of the land, might have been indited yesterday.

There is one written 2000 years ago telling of the posture of a great fallen lion which lies beside the Isphahan road and it is accurate to-day; but the local inhabitants credit that lion with being a mere youngster set up in the Middle Ages by Tamerlane when he conquered the place.

Then there is the even more painful case of the Ganj Namah inscriptions, cut deep into the rock in a sort of natural temple in the Alvand Ranges by Darius and his son Xerxes, 2500 years ago.

"A great God is Aurangazda who created this Earth, who created Heaven above, who made man, who gave peace unto him, who made Darius King, the one great King among many, the only great ruler among many. I am Darius, the Great King, King of Kings, King of the lands which have many peoples, King of the whole earth even to its borders, the Son of Hytaspes the Achæmenian."

The people of Persia, the folk classes, seem to have forgotten Darius and his tradition. They think this

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inscription refers to some hidden treasure as the name they give it testifies.

They have forgotten, also, in Hamadan, that fine, fertile-brained fellow-citizen of the old school, Astyages. Anyone who knows his Herodotus must have been fascinated with the forthright methods of Asytages, grandfather of Cyrus, who, having ordered his courtier, Harpagus, to murder the future conqueror of a good deal of the world while still an infant in arms, found out thirteen years afterwards that the order had not been obeyed.

Naturally he was angry at such a show of merciful laxity on the part of his minion and had him brought before him. Naturally, also, Harpagus being a perfect gentleman, apologized for his disobedience. No doubt, too, his personal knowledge of Astyages' technique in such cases was a distinct incentive to meekness, and he was pleased to find his master in a lenient mood.

"Oh, that's all alright, Harp," said Astyages when he had heard Harpagus's regrets. "Now I've got him I'll keep him. Let bygones be bygones! Send your son along to have a game with the lad this afternoon and drop in yourself to dinner. Don't worry to dress; only the family present."

"Nice bit of lamb you've got," said Harpagus a few hours later, "not merino, surely? Some of those new Armenian crossbreds, I presume?"

"No, local bred. Have some more! How's your glass, old man?"

"Pretty right, thanks. My word, this meat is prime."

"Had enough? Sure? Well, would you like to take a bit home to the wife?"

"That's awfully good of you, Your Majesty. Certain you can spare it?"

"Oh, quite, quite! Hey, Cambyses, bring in the rest of that lamb that Mr. Harpagus has been enjoying!"

And, the butler returning, Astyages presented his

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guest with the head and feet of the son whom the latter had sent to play with young Cyrus that afternoon.

"Very tender, wasn't he?" said the King, to the naturally aggrieved father suavely. "Glad you liked him enough to have a second helping. Perhaps it'll teach you that when I ask you to strangle an infant you've got to do it. However, no bad feeling! Always glad to see you on Saturday night, but you'll have to excuse me now. I have to see about the flaying of a few captives."

2

Looking at the modern Persian with his smiling face you would say at first glance that the grand old spirit which was the mainspring of romantic tales like these is quite dead. But recent history and your own ears in time contradict your first impression.

Within the past ten years Persia was burying brigands alive with only their heads exposed or taking them to the market place and there, with hooks in their nostrils to draw back their heads, cutting their throats in the face of the crowd. A man who travelled Persia fifteen years ago told me that at one place he encountered brigands nicely cemented up in pillars of gypsum and left in the sun to die; and an unfortunate criminal who had been immured feet first in mortar and others who had merely been hamstrung and had their hands lopped off under the First Offenders' Act.

Tentatively, at any rate, the British influence succeeded in doing during the war what Russian influence had failed to do before it, and checked this sort of horror. Now Reza Shah has set the seal on reform and established something like official responsibility. Under the old regime, it was only the brigand and the thief who were punished. Now, the stand of the Government is: If there are brigands, there is provincial incompetence. And if there is incompetence, it must be

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strangled. And, as you can't strangle incompetence in the abstract, the best way is to strangle the policemen who harbour it, a policy which is Solomon-like in its wisdom. No Governor minds having brigands about if he is going to be commended for catching them, but when he is likely to be throttled after every robbery which occurs on the roads, it is a great spur to his zeal.

So much so, it is said, that when an adventurous traveller passed through to India a year or two ago, determined to have brigands in his forthcoming book, he had to hire people to fire rifles over his entourage. The practising brigands are as dead as Caesar, and there are armed police posts every few miles whose inmates go pale with fear when you suggest that you intend to camp on the open plain. They beg you, for their sakes, not to do it, lest some wandering thief might be tempted. A few years ago they would not have minded.

Despite these changes of habits, however, the Persian proverb "Iran hamin ast" (Persia is always the same) is probably true underneath. You see some of the grit which made the Persian a conqueror in old times in the tenacity with which the small boys insist on riding on motor-car steps to the peril of their lives; in the determined way the peasants farm in places where no European could raise so much as a leek from the soil. Even though the water has to be tracked yard by yard and carefully directed for endless miles; though every woman in the community must go and fight for camel dung on the roads; though fertile soil must be built a foot high on the hard and stony floor of a desert, the Persian will raise his forty bushels to the acre. Also, if you run down his son in a motor-car, which is easy, since driving in the more remote Persian towns is very much like what it would have been in the horse-ridden and road-senseless streets of London or Sydney in 1890, all the relatives of the deceased will declare a blood feud

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against you. And the only recipe for safety when you become qualified as their victim is to fix your eye on the nearest point of the Persian border and to get there before your pursuers.

"If you kill any Persians or are caught photographing their womenfolk," said our kind adviser in Bagdad, "don't wait to report to the police. Get into top gear and keep going until your petrol"—Bagdad is where "Benzine" becomes "Petrol" again—"until your petrol runs out.

"Then fill up with petrol again and don't stop for anything less than a loaded field gun until you are well into Baluchistan."

Several times I thought we should need the advice.

3

The first thing one notices on leaving the plains for Upper Persia is the transport development which is going on.

The politics of the country are still a little mixed, but, inspired by the example of the great military highway which the British built from the Tigris to Tehran and then on to Meshed during the war, Reza Shah has begun to open up the country with good roads. He is also framing a railway policy, incontinently dismisses officers who march out of step on parade and has shown a fairly firm attitude towards the Bolsheviks whose shadow hangs over his country all the time. He was marching not undisciplined troops towards the northern border while we were there what time he debated with the Soviet over Persia's trading privileges.

He is able to give the Germans flying passenger rights to Berlin via Moscow and maintain some semblance of impartiality between the conflict of interests represented by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company wnich has made Persia rich and controls the greater half of the country's exports and his American advisers who, with

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Standard Oil and California at the back of their minds, no doubt, would like nothing better for a birthday present than the news that England had lost her oil concession.

Altogether, Persia is progressing, but at every step you see evidence that a few years ago it was in the Middle Ages. Thus, as soon as you have climbed the Azdabad Pass and made the high, hot-cold, rare-aired plateau which has even a more deleterious effect upon the constitution and the temper than the sweltering plains of Babylon, every town from the outside looks neat because it is surrounded by a high, forbidding wall, even though inside it may be a labyrinth and an abomination.

4

Most of the country-side to Kirman across the route from Hamadan which we took after we had climbed the mountains with their tortuous sweeps of good road and their fearsome precipices and their hairpin corners blocked usually on the nether side with wide waggons and bucking mules and bullocks, is easily described.

It is not unlike the higher parts of Asia Minor, only that its bones have been picked cleaner. The earth is mostly peppered with small stones or hidden in places with henna plants or salt-bush. Shepherds feed their sparse sheep on the hill-sides. The yellow grey, inward sloping square walls of towns and hamlets rise every few miles with, now and then, the dome of a mosque or square, tall, bare wind towers projecting above them. The inevitable poplar is to be found beside the streams. There is tamarisk on the desert edges.

Across the plain or the valley the mirage lies like a sea, steel blue water in which camel train and donkey pack and the mules which form grizzly funeral caravans (in which the coffined dead of lonely villages travel to holy places) achieve an appearance of sailing motion.

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Out of the sea rise little mounds which are the well heads of the kanats, the shafts reaching down to the underground channels in which the Persians, throughout their barren country, guide limpid, subartesian streams to their towns.

You pass from hill to hill in a blazing, shimmering heat by high-walled khans full of dozing camels and tale-telling camelteers; you whirl through villages while the police, dressed in blue uniforms and shakos reminiscent of Napoleon's Old Guard, chase you, pleading for a ride. Outside, the water channels slow your pace, for they are banked high every few hundred yards across the road, which is an earth track conventionalized by caravans and marked with the spoor of rare Fords. The wind blows in your face and there is suddenly a scent of wet places, of crop and of flowers.

Dreaming? No!

From where you swelter over bully beef and milkless tea at midday, a sort of mist sits on the land against the mountains. Nearer, along a sweep of road, it grows into a line of green. Fields open up. Where there has been only salt-bush and mirage, the earth is carpeted with closely packed wheat and barley, as green as Ireland.

Each field has been raised above the level of the road with accretions of fertilizer and rich soil, and a stream of limpid irrigation water runs along the border. Poplars and birches wave; next to the wheat is a meadow of flowering poppies; more wheat; great round pigeon towers full of blue-grey fluttering birds; acre upon acre of scents that seem more pungent after your days in the deserts. Then, dilapidated walls behind, you are in a narrow street, teeming with bazaars and excited policemen while the crowd tries its medley of languages on the dog—yourself.

A guide comes on board and you go to the British Consulate. You know what it is like because all British houses in Persia are the same. High walls, gardens

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and pools of clear water, waving trees and running streams; the odour of the rose and the poppy and the iris blossoming and a very ordinary-looking young or old or middle-aged Englishman living in an immense, cool, white house, with all the appanages of civilization around him, and a decanter of whisky on the sideboard. Enough servants to satisfy King Solomon stand about in long back coats and witches' cauldron fezzes, the black of which is relieved by the silver semblance of the British Royal coat of arms.

Hurrah! This is Royal Isphahan, home of romance and polo, which they are spoiling fast with traffic policemen and Ford motor-buses and with the cutting of a wide main road which is being pushed out to Yezd, so that it will presently connect Central Persia with the Indian railhead. It has ceased to be remote. No longer do they pelt you here with dead cats and filth as they might have done a few years ago. Their mirzas are anxious for British motor-car agencies. They talk of progress and irrigation, and the splendour of the days when the Shah's brother sat here as a sort of King—"the shadow of the Shah" he was called—and the city was a maze of holy places splashed with the blood, is gone for ever.

Through a welter of narrow streets, all pedestrians and corners round which the astonished donkey trains have to turn and flee from you, over canal bridges where a swerve of six inches means death, through rumbling soukhs and passages, and you are out once more on a parched, water-channelled plain, with the stony, salt-bush-nubbled country-side and its hummocky irrigation kanats around you; with the same old donkeys buried under their enormous loads of henna; veiled, black-robed women padding in their rear pushing them along at a heavy pace. The mirage is back in its place; so are the distant, high-walled villages, that look so secure and the poplars and the old palm and the heat. In a

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cloud of dust, you pass a little band with a turbaned leader, a compact *ménage* riding close together, armed men on horses very martial, women on donkeys whose bridles are embossed with silver and hung with gaudy tassels to keep the flies out of their eyes. The green flag of the Mecca pilgrims flies over this patriarchal progress; and, a mile on, you meet, in a pass, another man, blind, on foot, accompanied by a blue dungareed hajji with the dyed red beard of distinction. They, too, are waving an immense green flag.

"There is no God but God and Mohamet is his prophet," they shout as you come abreast. Hand goes to forehead as your krans ring in the dust and you look back to see them scrambling in the pulver for the spoils while the banner of the Prophet lies neglected where it has fallen across a thorn bush.

5

At nightfall comes Yezd. This is on the edge of the desert with a vengeance.

Yezd is the outback of Moslem Persia. It has less poplars and more winding, more narrow streets around its central square than Isphahan. Its every thoroughfare appears to have been built with a view to providing the robbers with dark corners. Everything in it is enclosed and shut away from the heat and the local burglar with high, smooth walls; and the bazaars, like those of Isphahan and almost every other town since Adana, are sheltered in the Arab manner with an arched roof above which lets in the light. To the poor European heathen it is a strange sight to see camels and donkeys being driven and ridden about under roofs in these places and it gives one a feeling of indecorousness to have to drive a car through them. It is almost as if you had invaded a private house, more especially as all the merchants pull in their legs and everybody drags out a few rugs and puts them down for you to run over.

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At first I was greatly disturbed by this practice, and several times stopped the car, thinking it was the Persian's diabolic method of hindering us. But argument only produced a polite signal to proceed. Then I dismissed the custom as a mark of honour by the poor, simple Iranian, doing homage to his high-born visitor. I reflected that it was a typically Oriental proceeding and felt rather inflated every time we encountered it until a friendly Mirza explained it to me.

"No," said he, "it is not for you but for the Americans. The carpet trade is almost dead now. Nobody buys carpets but the Americans. And what they pay for best is the antiques. The real antiques, of course, have nearly all gone years upon years ago. If there are any, they are worth their weight in gold a hundred times over. But these Americans—they are never satisfied. So our villagers put their carpets in the road for you and the camels to trample and hang them out in the sun and leave them for dew to bleach and we give the Americans the antiques they want. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of them don't know the difference.

"I think there are only five experts in the world who could be safely trusted to determine what is a genuine antique and what is not—one is in Tehran and one is in Kirman and one is in Constantinople; one is in Berlin and—Ziegler Brothers—who by the way are Manchester and English of the English—have another, and there is one man at South Kensington Museum. What does it matter? Doesn't it make the Americans happy to own antiques? Well, why then shouldn't we make antiques for them?"

I do not, of course, vouch for the Mirza's catalogue of experts, as I have no desire to be murdered by the hundreds of others who claim competence.

But to return to Yezd. There you may see Parsis

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in their small, tight, round turbans, possibly more numerously than anywhere else except in Bombay. There, every house of the better class overcomes the heat engendered by the stifling congestion, by erecting a tall graceful bad gir, or wind tower, a sort of chimney with slats upon its sides to catch the breezes; there you may behold fifty old men sitting round the sides of a square pool such as the Persian loves to build in his maidans dabbling their fingers and toes, *coram populo*; or, wandering into some tiny courtyard, where the light is dim with grey-green powder you may watch the holy camel grinding henna with a green stone mill. Round and round and round and round he goes, anchored to the creaking beam above him, blindfold so that he will not become giddy, his lower lip hanging down, his stride exact, his travesty of a tail standing straight up in the air with three solemn hairs on the end of it and green dust covering him and everything about him in a mildew-coloured layer. Hours afterward you may return and see him still going, and you wonder if he ever sees the sun—whether, indeed, he has ever enjoyed the open air since that father and prince of explorers, Messer Marco Polo startled him with his first sight of a modern European face somewhere early in the thirteenth century.

"It looks rather cruel to us," you say to your Mohammedan guide who has taken you through a back way to see the factory.

"Without the camel no hajji would be able to dye his beard when he comes back from Mecca, so that his virtue and accomplishment would remain unwritten. Neither would finger-nails be dyed as is prescribed. Allah will reward him," he says, grinning.

"Besides, where would our women be? Henna is not only a dye. It makes the hair to grow long and thick as Allah wills. You do not grow bald nor does your beard become thin if you use henna."

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CHAPTER XXIII

ACROSS THE LUT

I

NEAR Kirman begins the Lut, which is interesting to an Australian because it is real and acknowledged desert, one of the largest and most feared by travellers in the world.

Most of the tract through which we had passed until we left Yezd was reminiscent of the lands about Oodnadatta, in Australia, except that the high altitude gave it a clearer air, more like that of our McDonnell Ranges. Now it changed. It acquired more of the most deceptive features of every almost rainless country, which means that it looked as if it had been devastated only yesterday by torrential downpours, the reason being, of course, that where there is no grass to hold the land together, the earth is torn away by every shower no matter how small, and even the most moderate thunderstorm, especially if it be accompanied by wind, plays havoc with the ground.

The ground, in its turn, having been furrowed into narrow water channels a foot wide, six inches to a foot deep and steep-sided, played havoc with the car and our comfort. Speed was impossible. The strain on our carefully guarded crown wheel was exacting, so that we felt it incumbent to roll over every gully and crevice with clutch out. The villages provided a diversity of interest and of bumps, since they continued to be well bunkered with water channels.

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Mainly, however, the scenery was burnt-out hills and rows of kanats quivering in the heat. Then, to tempt us—we had a broken frame member mended with two rather doubtful clamps, by this time—Providence sent us the largest claypan we had either of us ever seen. Claypans are common in desert or semi-desert country. Central Australia has them in dozens, set between shifting sandhills. But this one was the father of all claypans. For mile upon mile it lay before us, floored like a tennis court only with a finer pulver, level as far as the eye could see, the sort of place the overlanding motorist dreams about and rarely finds.

Eighty miles an hour would have been a thoroughly safe speed on that piece of plain, but alas! we had to be content to cross it gingerly—whereafter every mile became more bumpy, hotter, more uncomfortable and temper-trying.

Came Kirman, the city of shawl and carpet, where we sent the sound of our progress through the roofed bazaars roaring across the rabbit-warren city until it beat against the brown hills behind. Kirman is as high above sea level as the top of Australia's highest mountain and as hot as the shores of Lake Eyre.

But, in the midst of the heat, was a travelled Persian Mirza, in a large two-story house full of salons hung with glorious hued rugs and with a veranda that looked out on a garden full of poplars through which the inevitable clear stream ran between straight-cut banks.

He regaled us with sweet cakes and tea till we were almost ill with his kindly hospitality while we discussed his travels. He had been to Paris and he had been to Singapore. He had been to the Hamburg Zoo to see a lion. He deeply regretted that he had never seen a giraffe.

"The giraffe," he said, "has a long neck. I should like to have seen one, so that I might theorize on the reason for its extension."

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"Long stretching of it, I suppose; generations of necks pulled out to their longest endeavouring to reach the topmost leaf."

"That seems likely," said the Mirza, as if a great weight had fallen from his mind. "Well, well, we Persians should be a nation of giraffes. Somebody has been stretching our necks ever since there was a world."

Kirman, around us, was quite foreign to this ordered garden and Persian poplars standing tall and straight like a platoon at attention. A hot haze of dust rose above the flat roofs of the town and hung round its wind towers and mosque domes.

Several poets, English, French and German, have written verses about old Karmania which sits stewing and smelling, under the burnt-out mountains and the frowning, mediæval forts. But then, there seems nothing which respectable poets will not write about, and one has to reflect often on such a journey as ours on the wisdom of the good Lord who imbues most of them with a desire to lie in bed late and drink large quantities of beer and devote themselves to lobster and other people's wives and die young, before they have time to see the world.

If Keats had sweltered in Darien, or Coleridge had gone to Xanadu to serve his apprenticeship, or Clinton Scollard had had first-hand knowledge of Hamadan, or Tom Moore had spent a fortnight in Kirman, the world would have lost some fine and often-quoted lines.

2

However, having left Kirman, we plunged just a shade more into the desert. Twenty miles out we camped on a claypan, in sight of the neat blue-domed village of Mahun. Then, on through more country, criss-crossed with water channels and tiny irrigation canals, till the city of Bam suddenly came out of a mirage and sat at our feet, a walled place huddled close together

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against groves of waving date-palms in a wide oasis behind, and a high castle frowning down on it from a crag. Bam, as you see it first, gives one an impression that it is shrinking from the desert as close as it can get to the oasis where there is clean, limpid water. The poplars had gone now. We were back in the palm lands.

Outside the walls to the east there is little or nothing but sand, sand, sand into which the telegraph line plunges hurriedly as if it desired to get its passage through the heat over as quickly as possible. The road has ceased to be. But lest the odd motor vehicles which cross the 270 miles, which lies between Bam and the Duzdab railhead, should need it, some Samaritan has marked the safest way with small cairns of stones every few yards. You have hundreds of miles of cairns of stones between here and Quetta, and it is as well for the stranger that they are there.

Out into the sand, you go with the telegraph line. The terrain becomes a series of sweeping ridges, round, after the fashion of the contour of the earth if it were reduced to a scale of one in four thousand. The surface is brown stones and a crust, which, if you make the wrong speed or turn too sharply, lets you down with a sibilant crunch into fine pulver below. The hills stand smoky and burnt out in the distance. Now a slimy river with a little water in it too salt to drink straggles by. Now an empty creek set with thorn bushes, the sort of place one would regard as the haunt of the lion, lies, an ugly grey streak, across the ironstone brown of landscape.

The land is still high and the air rare and the general conditions of the right kind to put a raw edge on one's temper and bring out latent fever. We camp, and the ground burns, at sunset, through our feet-soles. I light a fire and make a pretence at cooking a meal, and a big, yellow moon comes up and stares at us. The heat of the earth roasts through our valises, and Francis

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begins a long homily on desert, and pictures the time when the direst part of Central Australia will be edged with towns like Kirman and Bam. He draws entrancing pictures of those happy cities to come, and plans to construct a series of newspaper articles for the Australian press showing just what Persia has done in the way of settlement of the desert. He and I, for the moment, hate each other with the concentrated loathing which only two men who have spent three months in a motor-car together can feel. He founds, in what seems to my tired mind a purposely irritating monotone, several flourishing Australian colonies in the Great Victoria Desert, establishes the carpet industry and performs various other colonizing feats. In ordinary circumstances I would smile and go to sleep. To-night it seems to me monstrous that Francis should be permitted to go on like this, so I crush him with the remark that firstly Bam and Kirman could not exist in Central Australia in the areas which he has chosen, because no Australians would consent to live on the smell of an oil-rag under the Persian conditions which have made those cities barely possible. Secondly, he has picked on areas which have no shallow subartesian water, which Persian has in abundance. I taunt him gently that he has placed himself on the same level with Mr. Stefansson, an authority on the Arctic regions whom he dislikes.

The Australian Government not long ago sent Mr. Stefansson on a fortnight's exploration journey to report on the potentialities of Central Australia, and he very wisely remarked, in his thesis, that some of the region was like the country between the Mississippi and the Missouri, which has been brought to fertility. The only thing he omitted to say was that Centralia has neither the Mississippi nor the Missouri, which would be the deciding factors, if it were to be developed like the American country.

Francis becomes most indignant at this. He gets out

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of his blankets and, drawing coyly apart a few yards, talks to the moon. He says pungent words about the colossal impertinence of upstarts who criticize the great and experienced and outlines a scheme whereby he will bring water from New Guinea in pipes and make the centre of Australia blossom like the rose. He is perfectly in earnest, and the impression that he leaves is that he intends to do it so soon as he arrives home (with the help of three evening papers) just to spite me. Fortunately, this so amuses me that my temperature sinks considerably.

Also fortunately, Francis, whose mind runs to violence when he has fever, suddenly remembers all the things that he did to a buffalo hunter who insulted him in Arnheim Land and all the things he is going to do to a Northern Territory policeman when he meets him. He plans the future discomfiture of the poor constable nearly all night.

I drowse, turning over restlessly to dodge the moon. Francis eventually sinks into a coma broken by mouth-filling curses. A train of jackals squeals and shrieks somewhere in the shadow of a crumbling hill not far away.

Half a dozen times we rise and drink the water which has gone warm and oily in our cans. A grey-looking twilight, splashed with angry crimson, pales the westing moon out of existence. The ground is still uncomfortably hot. A furious sun rises as if it had just been released from a spring and finds us moodily and unsociably eating tinned fruit embalmed in sickly sweet and tepid juice.

3

That was how we began our second day in the Lut, and it was worse than the first. The solid crust of the surface gave way to sand hills and one sand river, the Shirgaz, which, despite warnings that had begun as far

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back as Bagdad, we sailed through in second gear. Big Dunlop tyres have killed all the terrors of sand and much of the worry of rough roads for the motorist with a little knowledge. We have seen in Australia that while, up to 1924, it was a feat to cross Central Australia in the sand regions with a motor-car, now the veriest amateur in motoring can achieve the passage of the Finke and the Hugh by reason of the broader shoeing of cars.

Nothing has, however, been invented to conquer the sun. The heat pulsed in swords of yellow, sometimes turning into flame in the air, defeating even the water mirage which ceased to lie across the land in a sea as it did further back. It was replaced by an illusion of quite another kind. The mountains, which the map showed to be sixty miles off, came up, writhing in long waves, to look at us and then went away. A team of camels, upside-down, transparent, celestial shadows, flopped in the upper air and faded out into a sudden steadiness of heaven. The universe ceased to grimace. Uprising features round us appeared momentarily clear and sharp, but very far away, emphasizing the immensity of space. The light impishly destroyed all perspective. This had a most singular effect on the vision, so that appearances seemed to depend largely on the elevation of the object looked at. A cairn of rocks marking the road a mile away on a slight rise appeared to be ten times the size of an exactly similar pile only a few yards ahead. Then the landscape would become almost normal.

With a quiver, this strange atmospheric play would begin over again.

The all-absorbing facts, however, were not these curiosities of sight so much as the red-hot hammer of the heat beating in one's blood, pulsing on the car bonnet so that drops of oil on it sizzled in small blisters. Life seemed to have been wiped off the face of the Lut. There were no more mud telegraph huts crammed full of uniforms; no more scattered Arab-descended popula-

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tions, relics of that Hejira which followed the murder of Hussein; no more wells of water. The only live thing we saw in three hours was William the hornet who arrived out of the blue and treated us to an extended entertainment.

William popped in on us in quite a friendly way, a great, golden red fellow with shining wings. In the most sociable fashion, he settled on the bonnet of the car, but no sooner had that portion on which a hornet sits down touched the metal, than he rose with the insect equivalent to a loud shriek of pain and anger. Then, he flew round in an anguished circle for several seconds.

He looked thoroughly annoyed. He swooped down on the bonnet.

"I'll teach you to bite me," he shouted in a loud buzz of hornet language to the bonnet which was at a red heat. He charged it again and again. He became fairly mad with rage, turning somersaults in the air in his perturbation. Every time he bit the bonnet, the bonnet bit him and eventually he became tired out and rolled over on his back on the broad surface of his adversary, where he remained until I mercifully brushed him off.

The hills came nearer and the heat more trying. Water began to worry us. I had, I thought, overloaded ourselves with water before we left Bam, but I soon found that we had underestimated our consumption. The radiator boiled hour in and hour out and needed replenishing every half-hour. Then we came to a well which should have been full of water and found it full of sand.

"My word," I remarked, "I shouldn't like to be out in this on foot."

And at that moment I noticed a crow, flying low.

This was mystery. You may see an insect in a waterless desert because he may have sat on your coat collar all the way into it, but usually where you see a bird there is water.

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Then, again, where there is water in the desert it is not usually a single bird that you see. Generally, there are myriads of them.

Nevertheless, a mile away or five miles away—the mirage did not allow of any accurate judgment of distance—was a single hovering crow very intent on something.

A moment later, an object moved on the ground. At least I thought it moved, but again you cannot be sure when you are gazing through an agued sun mist. However, I altered our course to make certain.

Sometimes the dark object on the ground looked like a stone. Sometimes it seemed like a beast. Sometimes it might have been another crow—it was very far away. Amazingly, it became both imminent and human. Right in the middle of a patch of red sand stood a Persian, his black fez upon his head, his scraggy bobbed hair, his unshaven face, his blue dungaree ballet dancer's skirt and curious trousers all the more incongruous in that wild spot. He had a pack upon his back and a pint water bottle in his hand. His lips were swollen unbelievably and the end of a dry, blue tongue protruded between them. His eyes were staring, bloodshot and mad. His face was covered with a plaster of sand and four days' stubble.

He held out his hands imploringly to us, croaking, "Ab! Ab!" (Water! water!) in the voice of a frog, and when we stopped, he collapsed on the ground and raising his hands towards Heaven cried thickly in the pious Arab formula which all Muslim peoples seem to know:

"Bismillahi er-Rahmani er-Rahim!" (In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.) Then he fainted.

It was no easy matter dealing with such a situation in such a place. We dragged our involuntary guest aboard and every few minutes gave him a spoonful of

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warm coffee from a thermos flask, forcing it between his lips. I was afraid to give him water, so bad was his state, but he continually raved for it.

At last I felt that I could safely give him a little, administering it a few drops at a time. But he only raved the more, and it was not until I filled his silly water bottle that he fell back with a sigh and went into a sound sleep, clasping it fiercely with both hands.

4

The day wore on and we ourselves began soon to feel that before long we might be in the same plight as our guest. Our main hope lay in finding a soak which we knew was somewhere near the entrance to the Afghan Pass which we expected to cross when we left the sand desert. I did not feel very hopeful about this, because I was certain that most of the information at our disposal would not have been collated in the heart of summer. Probably, therefore, any water of which we had reports would be dried up and our nearest supply would be a telegraph station about thirty miles from the beginning of the pass.

In the long ravine, approaching the mountain crossing, we used the last of our water except two gallons, which I held back and divided into four parts for safety against punctured tins, filling two of our thermos flasks and stowing them away under my own seat as a very last resource. Then we went on slowly between the burnt-out rock walls which reflected a terrific heat upon us. I looked at our thermometer on the dash-board and it showed 129°. The radiator boiled as if it had a fire under it, and we had to stop every few hundred yards in as much shadow as we could find, to try to cool it, drawing off some of the contents into a bucket and, after a pause, replacing this with cool water from our tins.

Our guest lay on the load under the red-hot hood and

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muttered deliriously, every little while breaking into choking screams and holding out his hands to us crying for a drink; then hugging his full bottle, which I would not let him drink. The crow followed us silently, keeping not too far away.

At last we came to a fork in the ravine with high rock towering on either side of us and three she-oak trees along the bank.

"Sure to be water here," said Francis.

"Sure!" said I, rather uncertainly.

We began to hunt for it. It looked as if at some time there had been a soak at the foot of the trees, but now there were only three dusty holes scooped out to the depth of an arm's length and stone dry at the bottom. I put a stick down into them an inch further and came to what seemed solid rock, and while I worked upon them, the passenger nuzzled against me, still a bit delirious, trying to put his hand into the holes and keeping up a perpetual cry.

Francis went up the right-hand fork of the gorge, a heat-struck figure, with haze climbing laughably up and down him when he was a hundred yards away. I got our shovel out and, carefully seeking the course of the tree roots, made another search. The roots seemed to go straight down among the rocks. After three attempts I sat down and began to watch for insects. The crow, across the way, also sat down in the broiling sun and he too, waved like Francis, who was now coming incorporeally back. There were no insects, but our passenger had suddenly got it into his head that I was going to leave him and he was on his knees in front of me. At intervals the silly fellow would take his fez off and I had to put it back for him. Furthermore, he would not stay in the shade.

Just as I had made up my mind that the best thing we could do was to camp till near nightfall, though I knew the pass to be unnegotiable in the dark, it occurred to

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me to try a divining rod made from a fork of the she-oak. This was a forlorn hope, as I did not expect such a timber to be much good.

To my surprise it worked as if there were a ton weight tied to the end of it. It worked over the dry holes which we had already investigated and nowhere else. I took the shovel and probed round their sides, and found that the bottom of each, in which flat stones lay, had at one time been hollowed out into a chamber and filled with sand. Our guest did the rest for me. He moved one of the stones which I had thought to be part of the living rock and immediately water began to trickle into the hollow. A stranger, not knowing, would never have guessed at the spring under the stone and our only trouble now was that Omar (which was our Persian's name, comically enough) was so lavish with our find that every time a cupful trickled into the well he would dip his small canister into it and sprinkle the contents over the parched landscape, with a loud chuckle.

5

It was not until he had had a solid meal that he became anywhere normal and then his plight was explained. He was a telegraph worker, and he had set out from the linesmen's hut across the pass to walk eighty miles to Bam. He had tried to conquer the Lut with no better precautions than the carrying of a pint of water and the nailing of a piece of Dunlop tyre to each boot sole.

He had left at four o'clock in the afternoon two days before, hoping to take advantage of the moon, marching through the night to make the next linesman's post at the Gurg before the heat of the next day had grown intolerable. His luck, however, had been out from the very beginning. The moon had proved of little use to him in the deep recesses of the pass and his progress had been slow, more especially as the heat had been intense. Also, he was haunted by some animal which

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seemed to be stalking him. I gathered that induced him to keep as close to the telegraph poles as possible, so that he could shin up one if he met with it or were attacked.

To make matters worse, he had only his single water bottle full of water, having taken a good drink before he started. He knew of the well of which we had been told on the Bam side of the pass and, as we had done, had found that the water in it had been replaced by sand.

At last, it was nine o'clock in the morning and the full force of the heat was beating down on him, so since the walking was more level towards Bam he did not turn back but staggered on, praying to his God and hoping to meet somebody. Then he ceased to be a man and the Lut turned him into a black, unthinking dot.

At some unearthly hour which he did not remember, he drank the last of his water, and when he had been sixty-five hours in the desert from the time of leaving the telegraph station, we found him. If he had kept on walking straight ahead he could probably have reached the end of his first stage; but when we discovered him, his tracks showed that he (and the crow) had been going round and round like a horse in a mill. Curiously enough, he did not resent the crow. That wicked bird, he said, was a messenger sent by Allah to guide him to us and safety. It had stood on the sand in front of him and lured him to follow it. Actually, the evil thing was waiting for him to tumble down and die. Possibly, it was even tempting him to run forward and exhaust himself chasing it. You never know how deep the cunning of a crow may be.

Past the gorge, we dropped our passenger at the telegraph station whence he had come, after we had filled up with water from the linesmen's abundant wells. The pass had been far from hospitable with its winding shelves of slippery rock and sharp hairpin

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bends and blinding heat. The telegraph station made up for it.

Our comrade had a warm welcome. They had regarded him as either in Bam or dead. Such is Oriental indifference that it did not seem to matter very much to them which fate had befallen him, and therefore they sent out no search party. Now he was here, however, they were glad to see him.

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CHAPTER XXIV

ON THE EDGE OF AN EMPIRE

I

ON a very hot day in the month of May, the Presence was sitting in a large chair in the Chagai Political Officer's bungalow at Nushki, reading an American novel. He had arrived the day before—he and Mr. Francis Birtles, A.D.C.

They had been strongly advised in Bagdad not to try to motor through Baluchistan at that time of the year (i.e. in May) and they had repudiated the advice with scorn. Their view of the lovely scenery of Baluchistan had been their reward.

There is a lot of scenery in Baluchistan.

There are 2,000,000 straight-sided gutters scored across the road, which, like that in the Lut, is marked by small piles of stones, with the difference that here the stones are occasionally covered by sand drifts. There are also several mountains, grey or smoky blue or frowning black, worn out, treeless, wolf-ridden, tribe-cursed, crumbling chains of crags. Add to these some salt bush so dry that, when you put a match to it, it flares like benzine and disappears in the breeze as a wraith of ash; a salt desert; a long ribbon of railway line going to Duzdab where His Excellency had taken his clearances from the country of the Black Fez; a number of uninviting, not to say aggressive, blockhouses inside which the railway officials live; many camels; Dalbandin, a township full of Indians; a sprinkling of water tanks and seven

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she-oak trees all with Baluchis under them, and you have described the whole of the country from Duzdab on the Persian border to Nushki.

Oh, and I forgot the sun.

By the Khan of Khalat, it is something like a sun. It arrives with a hop, step and a jump without any heralding, seizes the poor traveller by the back of the neck and hammers him all day with a heat club until he surrenders. Whether this sun makes a mirage or not I cannot say, because I wasn't interested. The only thing one is interested in in Baluchistan in summer is getting somewhere out of the heat, which combines all the different kinds of warmth known to man from New Guinea to London (which, at 95°, can be most unpleasant), from Charlotte Waters to the Red Sea, and ties them to a wind full of fine sand and a glare which makes movement without coloured glasses almost impossible.

Nothing stirs in the daytime. The camels stand round the water tanks at the sidings. Except near sundown, the lank, untidy railway employees mostly lie in the shadow of their walls. The mountain sheep jostle each other for shade. And the famed Baluchi raider, the nasty fellow whose doings provide Tudor homes for lady novelists, seems to take his hawk eye and his long rifle and his three-foot Afghan knife incontinently to his tower rather than face Old Sol.

As travelling at night was impossible with our many mechanical troubles and experimental breakages, we were compelled to face him. It was a case of rush for two hours; stop at a linesman's shelter; get down; vomit; pile saltbush together and set it flaring with a roaring wind behind it against your kettle; gulp down boiling tea mixed with whisky and make another dash.

2

It was while this was going on that I suddenly became the Presence. All through Turkey and Syria and Persia

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the native shows very little respect to you. In British India, at least along the border, you find yourself exalted.

You leave Persia from a township of flat mud buildings with camels loaded down with petrol from the Anglo-Persian wells, filling Indian trains with their cargo. The natives stand about and make lewd Persian remarks to you which they think you will not understand, and when you speak to them they grin.

The Consul wishes you good-bye. The white-clad Sikh merchants with their little swords hung round their necks and their slippers and their long black beards stand at their doors, and all their clerks, like something out of an Oriental dream, cease for a few minutes from their lovely Nagari penmanship and bow gravely to you. The dogs bark. The dust rises. The small boys, since it is the cool of the afternoon and not more than 103° in the shade, run after you. The camels grunt and swing their petrol cases about most inconsiderately to the Anglo-Persian Company. You ask the beggar the way, making a Mohammedan sign at him, and he answers you straight between the eyes.

You cross the border. You drink limejuice and tea with the Assistant British Political Officer, go out into the ragged tangle of gullies and wadis and tumbled stone and sand which forms the western approach to the Indian Empire. Presently you see a block house. Seventeen stout fellows in dirty robes and turbans are sitting outside picking their teeth in the interests of the British Raj. You approach them. At once, they rise bolt upright as one man.

They stand for a second quivering with respect. Then they roll themselves up slowly like caterpillars which have been touched with a stick and neatly and unanimously lay their foreheads on the dust until Your Honour has deigned to pass them. You have become a Sahib. At first it seems rather more humiliating to you than to the man who pays you his duty for some inexplic-

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able reason, but you soon come to understand that the ryot and the coolie love to salaam before you. They have been doing it for thousands of years, and they like a Lord even more than the average Labour member. Not only do those who are adjacent to you genuflect, but time and again in the country bordering the North-West Provinces I have seen a ploughman 200 yards away look up at the roar of the motor-car and hurry to the roadside so as to be waiting for your approach in a trance of veneration.

Well, to get back to the beginning of this chapter, we were in Nushki and housed in the Political Officer's bungalow, thanks to Major Betham, of the Chagai Political Corps. Nushki is an entirely native military town of mud huts and barracks and neat Baluchi levies, and we had arrived there the evening before, spent to the last ounce of our strength. We were dirty and dishevelled and unshaven.

Francis straightway went to sleep in the car, which refused to climb the steep winding hill to the bungalow. I should have liked to do the same; but as we were the only white men in the place, it seemed wiser to grow as like a Sahib as possible. So to bath and shave and order food through the chowkidar and receive the tahsildar and the commander of the troops.

Then, under a rising moon, I had time to observe our position.

Nushki lay in a valley, 100 miles south of Kandhahar as the crow flies. Over it towered high walls of mountain, and nearer, shadowing it, two small hills like the Maedchenbrueste of Maron in the Bismarck Islands, peaks flattened artificially on top with a road running between them.

On the summit of one sat our bungalow shut away from the world on every side by steep slopes which only needed a footstep to make them slide plainward in little avalanches of crumbling shale and fast-running earth.

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The road wandered up to us by as tortuous and exposed a route as the mind of military man could devise, every yard of it coverable by machine-gun fire. On one side, through a tracery of barbed wire, lay the native town and the barracks, noisy with native jollity. On the other, a long, level plain reaching past the Afghan border eleven miles away, stabbed with watchfires. I looked to the right, there was barbed wire. To the left, there was barbed wire. Then I noticed that the flat roofs of the empty servants' quarters, like that of the bungalow, had been turned into sandbagged rifle and machine-gun posts with the usual defensive fringe. On the Afghan side, the barbed wire ran all the way down the slope. There was not an approach that was not covered, not a water score on the hill-side that was not enfiladed.

A shadow and a glint—bayonet over shoulder, manly figure erect, one of our half-dozen guards went by with crisp, well-drilled infantry step.

They take no chances on the border. It is some time since the raiders have come down here. But especially since 1919, when England fought a quiet war against the Afghans and the border tribes along a 2000 mile front and said little about it, there has been no knowing.

"It is quite cool here, sir," said a level voice behind me, and behold here was Serjan Singh, the local commander in chief of the Baluchi levies. All of a man was Serjan Singh, and a proud man too. Except for his turban and his flowing black beard never touched by a razor and his wide, bright black eyes and neat little hands, you might have taken him for a British subaltern. His manners were independent and easy. He had been in London and seen the Emperor. He had fought in France and Mesopotamia. Behind the marvellous polish of his exterior, in which everything was precise and well ordered, you saw a hint of fine blood and a finer temper. Serjan Singh, yarning in the moonlight, was a very gentle fellow. Behind his gentleness, you

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felt, lay hidden the power of the leopard's spring. You thought that you would much prefer to be chatting with him there and chaffing his faithful dog, Prince, a noble hound which seemed to consist of several tousled coils of hair wrapped round two red eyes and a loud, gruff, friendly bark, than doing mortal combat with him. He talked, simply but with the dignity of one who at normal times was the British Empire in this out-of-the-way place—about his ruffians of Baluchi levy police of whom he was very proud and the glory of the British Raj which he adored and the changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace which appealed to his Oriental eye as one of the fit splendours of British greatness. Then:

"I think, Sahib, you would not be wise to walk about too much here. There are fever and snakes. Besides" —he looked to the fires on the border—"it is better inside."

His hand went to the salute and he strode away, the son of a fierce, loyal race which won its spurs when it stood to England in the Great Mutiny, a very happy warrior, keeping the marches mainly on a diet of water and vegetables. The Sikh is a much-honoured man in India.

He disappeared silently into the shadows.

I heard Prince give tongue, chasing the inevitable goat down the village street.

Bed—inside mosquito curtains—throbbing, aching, sweating bed with crumbs all over it; Francis muttering with fever next door and, hovering in the murk of the room, an evil dream all about Afghans with three-foot knives.

3

In the morning I rose betimes and proceeded to have breakfast. Francis said he would not have breakfast. He lay ragged, collarless, exhausted, without shoes, which he had removed to cool his heat-aching feet on a

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settee in the corner of the sitting-room. He said I was mad to dress for a few savages who were to call on me. The proper dress in which to receive them was a shirt and knobkerry. This did not deter me from either dressing or eating. I began with some country curry which seemed to consist of all the chicken bones in Baluchistan, mixed with cayenne pepper in the proportion of one to three. Then I had some rice. The fame of Indian cooked rice reaches even to the North and South Poles, but as Nushki is on the wild outskirts of the Empire, it has a special dispensation, apparently, to adopt its own method of preparation, which seems to consist of putting a very large quantity of the useful cereal in a pan over a very hot fire and then going off for a long walk. When the flare of the burning dish lights the skyline, you return and remove it. When I had enjoyed about three spoonfuls of the product of this process, I decided to have a drink.

"Now for some good old limejuice," I said. "Have some, Frank?" Frank said he would; my oath, he would, as limejuice and whisky were the only civilized articles of diet in that benighted region. I opened the bottle which I had had brought from the bazaar and served two drinks, well diluted. It was a good thing that they were. I am not sure to this day whether the bazaar had given us spirits of salts or sulphuric acid by mistake. Anyway, the skin came off my mouth in one sheet and the air rang with the views of Francis, who had not got quite so good a mouthful of it.

While I sat listening in admiration to his oration, a deferential cough penetrated to us from the main doorway of the bungalow, and it suddenly dawned on me that the vestibule was occupied by several people. It also dawned on Francis, who was at the moment walking round in circles in the sitting-room in his two-garment costume, his motor grime and his stockinged feet. He promptly effaced himself by diving into the

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large settee which stood with its back to the centre of the room.

The chowkidar came in. Various officials, he said or rather implied, speaking with much respect for them and more towards myself, were waiting to have the honour of presenting their felicitations on our safe arrival and good health. Then he kissed the ground before me (he was a very nice chowkidar) and retired backwards.

The delegation entered. There were four of them—schoolmaster, chemist and others. They were asked to sit. They sat in a row, a thin, sallow man with melting eyes and a green-grey Hindu cap; a large jovial fellow all teeth and beard, with a red fez on top; a khaki turban above a fat countenance and a black, untended moustache, and another turban of pale lavender wound with amazing art. Bolt upright, they sat looking comically like four small boys who have been asked to take tea with their housemaster, which is the standard attitude of the lowly placed Indian official towards his white superior.

The Labour member who rants about the stern cruelty of British tyranny over the poor Indian is all wrong. The atmosphere of the remoter Indian Civil Service is that of the "Fifth Form at St. Dominics." The British are the school masters; the lesser Indians are the usual gang of mischievous, dishonest, prank-playing little boys, always ready to figuratively get out of bounds and sneak to the tart shop at night and indulge in shovepenny and some magnified Indian version of smoking behind the haystack, and occasionally put birdlime in the master's chair in the form of a healthy little massacre or venture in religious politics. (The Rajputs and the Sikhs are cats of another colour.)

We looked at each other. Said the Red Fez:

"We have come to bid you great welcome, Sahib."

I said I was delighted to see them and they all bobbed over my hand. Then they proceeded to say nothing.

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I opined that Nushki was a neat and well-kept station; that the population was delightful and the weather salubrious, and they all bobbed. I tried the military situation and the delights of peace and they bobbed again.

Finally, the Red Fez decided to be brightly conversational:

"You—have—been—Australia, Sahib?"

"Yes. That is my home."

"Very—nice—country, Your Honour?"

"Very nice, indeed."

"Ah!"

Every one meditated on this for some time, while I wondered what the etiquette of these situations was. Red Fez spoke again:

"You—have—been—Srinagar,—Sahib?"

"No, I believe Kashmir is a very lovely country."

"Very beautiful, Sahib. Very nice country."

A loud choking sound from the pale lavender Turban suggested that he had swallowed the piece of chewing gum which every small boy carries in his cheek when he can. When my eye fell on him, he suppressed his throat trouble, which was merely due to his joy at the mention of the capital of Kashmir, with a guilty look.

We had been in turn to Zanzibar, Malta, London, Buenos Aires, Simla, and Sarawak according to formula, when I noticed all eyes straying in the direction of the couch on which Francis was supposed to be hiding himself from the public view. The eyes seemed fairly to bulge with excitement at what they saw.

Turning my head discreetly, I beheld a foot, elevated above the end of the settee. The foot was partially covered in a sock. It was, in fact, a regular bush bachelor's sock with ordinary human toe protruding. But it was a most expressive toe.

It was behaving purely as a reflex to the emotions of its owner, who, I had no doubt, was deeply involved in

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one of his most beloved adventure stories. "Die then, villain," hissed Red Gum Rufe, the Hero, "and as his seven shots hit the welkin unanimously, his vile foe bit the dust." Francis' toe said it as well as any print. The expression of the onlookers became that of the form which is most enjoyably watching some inky person riding for a bad fall. "Now," their faces said, "some one will catch it in the neck in a minute! What a blooming lark!" Francis, having killed his enemy, realized that he was supposed to be invisible and withdrew his foot so hastily that I was compelled to laugh; whereafter everything went swimmingly. The Red Fez even gave me a free lesson in Urdu, which is one of the most miserable languages in the world.

It is, of course, a sort of Indian Esperanto, fifty per cent of the words of which are Persian and the others from goodness knows where. The character of its colloquial grammar is thoroughly in keeping with that of the peasant and with the oppression of centuries of Moguls. It is passive and intransitive throughout, and its method of expression makes it clear that the speaker is entirely the plaything of Providence and of the next Sahib above him. Still, as spoken for ordinary domestic uses, it is very easy to acquire, more especially as the lordly Sahib deigns to speak it generally with an Oxford accent and an English intonation. Soon he will not need to speak it, because India is taking to English like a duck to water; so that where, until quite recently, one or two native languages were essential to the British resident, most of the younger generation do not trouble to speak more than a couple of dozen words of the common Indian tongue. Only west of Delhi does the local language begin to be essential.

However, nobody is likely to regret the common variety of Hindustani. It has none of the merits of Turkish, for instance, which from its exactitude, regularity and perfect stock of inflections might have been

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composed by one of the more precise equity Counsel with the aid of some such *littérateur* as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.

4

I was on such good terms with our visitors, who dropped in in twos and threes all the forenoon, that when we left and they gathered at the street corners to do us honour, we had a most good-humoured levee. I shook hands till I felt like the Prince of Wales after a reception. Then the whole city left its work in the roads and the bazaars and decorously creased itself in the middle while we went by and out into the mountains on the last hundred miles of our run to Quetta.

Had they cared to follow us a few miles, they would have seen old Scrap Iron, who had determined at any cost to prevent us from reaching Indian civilization, sheer three differential bolts on a dangerous hairpin bend. They would have seen His Excellency leap on to a very sore foot on which an abscess had developed a day or two before and which he was afraid to lance, and with loud curses chock the car in time to prevent disaster over a twenty-foot cliff.

They would have seen Mr. Francis Birtles, no longer A.D.C., a wriggling five feet ten of profanity, putting new bolts in, what time he lay in the dust. They would have beheld the Presence trying to make tea with a spirit stove which had gone wrong, and they would have observed the stove go flying through the air into the gulch below. They would have noticed Scrap Iron being jacked round the hairpin bend—the first time she had known that ignominious treatment—and rewarding her helpers by falling with all her weight off the jack, hitting Francis on the knee-cap with her bumper.

After which they might have followed us through a land which was surely the dump of Creation where the Lord stowed away all the hills He did not need for the

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ordinary purposes of Genesis, seen a big end bearing go, observed us, through the long, dreary Lak Pass at Sheik Wasil anchored on the top of a water dyke with our frame so twisted that nothing could be done with us until thirty stout fellows, headed by the station-master, had towed us off. Finally, we spent a hot night full of wind and dust, and while Francis slept liké a log, I, holding my throbbing heel, watched an angry and thwarted cobra dealing with our sealed water tin which refused to give him a drink.

Several times I felt tempted to rise and murder him, but I had no desire either to put my foot to the ground before morning or to be held guilty by Mrs. Cobra of the death of her lord and master.

However, I lay awake till dawn, and Quetta with its long cantonments and shady streets and cool drinks and bagpipe-led Ghurkas rose on the horizon. We were fourteen days in Quetta. My foot rapidly went from bad to worse, and I was compelled to lie up entirely in the delightful dak bungalow which is the cheapest hotel in the world, taking its cuisine and accommodation into account.

Even in bed there was plenty of amusement. Stephen John, the Goa man who was my attendant and temporary bearer, helped my Hindustani along at a great rate. Baluchi musicians played outside my window. Friends came in to visit, and there was a continual traffic of uniforms and motor-cars along the piece of almost English road that ran in front of the wide compounds. Quetta has ceased to be the place to which the infamous Mrs. Barrett sent her spouse to die in Kipling's day. It is a picked station which officials vie with each other to reach. In these days, if there are any Mrs. Barretts, they try to get their Jacks sent to Jacobabad and themselves remain at the outpost—if they are allowed.

The day before we left, Francis came into my sick-room with a fortune-teller, who had the look of the lily

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and a very white turban. He gazed at my hand long and earnestly:

"You have a wife and a ginger kid, which is very lucky," he said, "and you are most lazy gentleman," (I was, of course in bed); "yes, and in two year you will get three thousand pound on which you pay me commission. Presently, you see your own country and now you give me five rupee and one reference, Sahib, by your favour."

"I'll give you eight annas."

"Very good, Sahib. As your honour says, that is really excellent, but you will pay me commission on three thousand quid, twelve per cent, thank you very much."

Then he turned his attention to Francis and invested him with a long black past and a short black future full of crime and sorrow. Francis, I may mention, had expressed his opinion that an eight-anna fee would be extravagance. I presume his fortunes suffered accordingly.

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CHAPTER XXV

THE LONG, LONG INDIAN DAY

I

THE Indian day is long and grey and hot. It is greyer than the summer day of even dull-vegetationed Centralia. The sand curtain hangs, a high and ghostly wall, before its horizon. Its hills, dust-covered with a million winds, burnt bare with a million suns, stand and pant, and the hot loo, which lives somewhere in the Lut, when it is at home, comes howling along full of grit and burning the back of men's necks.

On the plains, no man works in the Indian summer; but by Quetta, where it is supposed to be cool, the work of the year goes on under the shadow of Zargun. The band plays in the broad compound of the club of an afternoon. The Ghurka bagpipes squeal down the main street between the houses which are ranged in deep compounds, each with the label and designation of its owner displayed on the gatepost.

Beyond, on the road to Loralai, you may see, in the morning, a great aeroplane sailing beyond the town.

"Womp!" the earth flies up round a heap of white stone; the aeroplane wheels gracefully and goes back on its tracks.

"Womp!" it goes on day after day outside Quetta, this grisly bomb practice against the hour when the tribes or some one beyond them may come down. Further on, Ghurkas come out of their little forts and stare at you with only half interest and then, beetling hill-top

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and hairpin bend, deep ravine and trickling stream crossing, stony nullah and sudden range, the road creeps and crawls and sneaks by the best defended, most winding way that the mind of military man can devise through wooded hills, to Ziarat and to Loralai.

You wonder what it is all about when you first encounter this highway doing experiments with the geometry of the circle and the ellipse. Why did they not take it down such a ravine or straight over such and such a saddle-back? Presently the answer becomes plain. The British Royal Engineer is an artist at depriving the dropper of stones and the precipice sniper, the ambush expert and the rush-at-dawn raider of his chances. He is an adept at giving his road cover, and the bullet singing down the pass when he has left his mark on the landscape has to be quick in its mission to be effective; otherwise, its prey is round the corner and turning himself from the stalked into a stalker, before it can do any damage.

There are many miles like this from Quetta before the border country settles into a straight well-watered valley, full of trees and guarded on either side by some of the sheerest cliffs that nature could conceive. Then, more trees and more climbing and another long vale full of dust storm, in which our car decided to hold us up with a big end bearing knocking dangerously. Covering her round with a tarpaulin, we took her sump off in the afternoon, Francis muttering that he knew something of this sort would happen so soon as we reached a good road.

Just as we had everything mended, a military car swept past on the wrong side of us, lifted our curtains with the rush of its going and filled our crank-case with fine sand which jambed the pistons and gave us another hour of washing our cylinders with kerosene and performing other feats of cleanliness before we could go on, through a hilly, treacherous-looking tract.

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Still, there were no bad roads now. We had done with bad roads. We bowled along at a great pace—almost twenty miles an hour and knocking on not more than two cylinders—to Loralai in the moonlight, despite the warnings which we had had not to be out after dark.

We made camp in the dak bungalow with a rough dak bungalow meal; but with no sleep to follow for me, for my poisoned foot pulsed like a steam-hammer, sending shoots of pain up my spine and kept me effectually from resting. I heard the jackals go down the middle of the main street, a squealing train of ghosts. I heard a leopard cough and every dog for miles wake in half-frightened barking. The black of the Indian night changed to a light, hot grey. Followed the "Ghusl taiyàr hai" (bath is ready) of the bhisti, pouring water in the next room and bobbing his respectful form in the doorway.

Loralai—hot, pale, mist-hung, bare-cragged—woke lazily to another Sunday, with the officers of Skinner's Horse trying to pretend that they were in England and rising early for their rides, and all the lazy Indians basking on their beds out of doors, and three Pathan prisoners and a man with a big stick going out to make roads.

2

I went to see the Political Officer and he assured me that we might go on. At eleven we went, after doctoring the two musical bearings. I had no fancy for break-downs on the next hundred mile stretch, for along that, an earth track, with rains impending, the inhabitants were so inhospitable to strangers that the British Raj turned out its patrols to see that we were not slaughtered. Not that anyone has been slaughtered there for a long time, but, as I have said in effect somewhere before, the Empire has learnt that it must have a long memory on the border. It has to have, because the Pathan does not

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change. You stop him shooting up tourists for six or seven years. You make up your mind that he has become converted from his evil ways. He watches your guards go off down the road, sighs with satisfaction and taking his old Martini to his favourite perch with a chuckle, he shoots the nearest infidel under cover of your dust cloud. Of course, the British never used to worry very much about his operations, because he was not accustomed, through lack of opportunity, to destroy anything except a few subalterns, who are three a penny in Great Britain, and odd policemen and natives who are both improved by being shot over a little. But in his last effort, hereabouts, the undiscriminating hillman bagged some quite inoffensive Americans—goodness knows how they got there—and authority felt that it was Time to Take a Stand. Wherefore it enlisted every robber it could find in the levies; and when anyone passes from the highlands to the plains, these villainous-looking gentry come out armed to the teeth and keep a zone, the width of two rifle-shots, clear on either side of the way.

It is not a nice place to be shot in. In appearance, it is first cousin to the worst of Western Baluchistan, with knobs and kopjes of rock lavishly distributed over it, and more than its meed of sullen ranges, burning valleys and curious claypans and mountain streams. Its vegetation seems to be largely saltbush, diversified with thorn and zamia and a queer sort of mountain palm.

Towards the end of the day in this, my throbbing foot had swollen till even a slipper would not remain on it. Of course, nearly all the work fell on the devoted shoulders of Francis, and we were just congratulating ourselves that Ruchkni and its rest house was not very far away when "plump!" down came the rain.

It fell just like that, as I have seen a man being hanged, drop through a scaffold. One moment it was a black and whirling cloud. The next it was a sheet of silver

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on a clay plain ahead, and several nullahs and creeks which had had dry beds were yellow and raging torrents.

We were on the banks of one of these five minutes after the fall began and, seeing the creek rapidly rising, decided to rush it. We did and our reward was a sump full of water. We sat derelict in the stream and waited for the flood to abate. After a time we both got out, feeling that it was still rising rather than falling, and made the bank to debate the advisability of pulling our outfit backwards to comparatively dry land with a Spanish windlass.

Immediately the water went down as if some giant had drunk it. I stayed on shore nursing my troubles, while Francis fed a little oil into Scrap Iron. Half-way through this proceeding, I heard a roar of water. I yelled to him, and without waiting for me, he started the engine and rushed to the other side.

Then the new spate of water arrived and I had to wait before I risked a passage through it.

We pushed on. It rained again, and when we came to Ruchkni at dusk we could have successfully entered for a dejected-looking men's competition anywhere on earth. Having no side-curtains or mud-guards we were covered in wet mire. Our bonnet looked like a newly ploughed field. We were both wet through and I was seeing purple spots from pain.

When the chowkidar had opened the rest house for us, I went inside and sat at the table. Francis went out with the chowkidar to bring in our sleeping valises and stores.

It suddenly occurred to me (quite unjustifiably) that Francis might not be able to make himself understood and I rose to go to him. There is a blank after that. My next memory is of being—I will not say standing, because I do not know—at the back door of the rest-house bedroom. Everything was perfectly clear and normal. Francis and the chowkidar were laying a long,

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lank, unshaven person, whose face seemed to be set in rigor mortis, on the bed. I cannot say whether I recognized this familiar figure. But I distinctly heard Francis say: "The poor beggar's gone all right." He then used some language which completely authenticated his reality. After which I woke up on the bed. The long, lank person was myself. It was a strange crystal-clear experience. I have since regretted that while I was at the door I did not feel my shoulder-blades. It would be nice to know that in those few seconds of incorporeality I had grown wings. There is nothing like having one's future fully assured. However, we are all apt to lose our best chances of acquiring knowledge.

The outstanding feature of the adventure was, to my mind, afterwards, the complete lack of interest in or sympathy for the poor corpse on the bed which my other self in the doorway felt.

In the morning Francis wanted to say where we were, but night had changed my leg into a pillar of purple streaks and I had lumps under knees and arms and a blinding, subconscious pain which seemed to make it advisable to get to a doctor as quickly as possible.

Poor Francis, therefore, had the full brunt of that morning's work. He it was who got us safely across the Ruckhni River and the mire on the other side, while I sat in the car occasionally saying some sultry words to the helpers who were supposed to be removing us from bogs.

We came to the foothills with the bulk of the Suleiman Range above us. And as we climbed the well-graded road, we saw a signpost which told us we were in the Punjab.

Then Fort Munro, on the summit, lonely and dreary, commanding the road and a sudden and amazing change of scene.

After you leave the Fort you drop to the plains 6,300 feet in seventeen miles, and then all India lies so level

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before you that you could almost play billiards on any part of it for the next thousand miles. India is, indeed, a country of large helpings—a thousand miles of crags and thorn and tamarisk and sand; the long Indus and Jumna Plains; huge teeming cities, large lonely spaces; flat, flat Punjab and, thirty miles away, the heaving thrust of the Himalaya.

Once, in this spot, the way was even quicker to the plains than it is now. Half a dozen straight leaps of eight hundred feet each would have seen one most of the way to the bottom. But the British were ever a gradual people. By dint of blasting a path along the faces of thousand feet precipices on which one feels like a fly; of sneaking a macadamized highway precariously round spurs, the surfaces of which Nature had left in a most impermanent state; of building seventeen miles of road with fifty-three hairpin bends in it, they have achieved a means of passage from above to below or from below to above which has not, one would guess, a grade of more than one in fifteen. Most of the way, indeed, appears to be level, but at any stage in the progress there is no point at which, by means of a skittish side-step, man could not turn himself into mince.

Always there is a rocky crag below which looks like a milestone and resolves itself into a sizeable hill after more careful inspection of its perspectives. Always there are miles of visible rippling, twining, fluid-looking, macadamized road directly under one's feet except at two or three choice vantage-points where you look straight off an overhanging cliff into empty air bottomed by chlorine-hued or aquamarine water so clear that the boulders which it covers are revealed as a rude mosaic of many-coloured pebbles.

3

At the bottom of it all is Mother India—I mean regularly administered India—and all its wonders. The

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first of them was at Dera Ghazi Khan. We arrived there at midday and went to the dak bungalow. Feeling badly in need of a surgeon, I asked the Khansamah where the Civil Headquarters were. Down the main and dusty street full of camel and donkey, squatting Hindu, white-clad Baluchi, fierce Pathan and into a mud-walled compound just like any other barrack enclosure; to a veranda with a sepoy on the steps and a vulture on the roof-tree, and there was the ruler of Dera Ghazi Khan which lies almost on the banks of the Indus River; the only white man in a teeming, naughty world, surrounded by servitors so hushed with his greatness that it took me half an hour to persuade them to wake him.

When he woke, he proved to be a tousled, pleasant-faced product of what he called ruefully, but with affection, a "dirty little town called Stourbridge." He might have been twenty-six; he was, for the moment, without shoes as he lay on his stretcher; but despite border thieves and babus and the heat and the flies and the cholera and fever he said he would be happy to stay where he was for the rest of his life.

On hearing that we knew Stourbridge, he was completely at our service. He sent for the Public Works Director, who, I suspect, was his official senior, and said a few well-chosen words which had that gentleman and his lilac turban and neat European costume patiently holding up the cross-Indus steamer for us next morning with the air of Charon ready to ferry Anchises.

Then he came to the dak bungalow, and in a few more terse but entirely courteous words reduced the Khansamah to a state of dusty reverence coupled with a zeal, which as from magic saddle-bags, produced whisky, better bedsteads, a bhisti, a temporary bearer, a punkah and a punkah wallah.

He had, also, by this time so interested me in the doings of his station that by dint of continuing to hold a

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match between my teeth, I was able to do without a surgeon (which was as well) and to make a resolution to "hang on till Delhi." I dislike surgeons *qua* surgeons. Old Mother Nature and a bread poultice for me, where possible.

He led out his platoon of native police (who were only in the third form and not in the fifth like the higher grade officials we had met at Nushki) and delivered a lecture on our car and ourselves. They stood easily about and asked him questions, their eyes friendly towards him, and at intervals he was compelled to remark: "Now the blighter's talking Baluchi and that's too deep for me. I've passed in it, but I can't follow 'em." Whereafter he would drag an excited interpreter back into the shallower waters of Hindustani.

Of course we had to dine and talk about Stourbridge, and afterwards we sat in the compound and the garrison gave us a performance. There was a sepoy who nonchalantly picked his bed up in his teeth and did a whirling dervish dance with it. There were two large Pathans who spoke at least two words of English, which were "Quick March," which they used as a prelude to the most stirring Scottish airs, played upon their bagpipes. It was strange in the hot, pallid moonlight to hear the skirl of the pipes, manipulated by two savages in turbans with a Scottish sadness or fierceness. We had "Flowers of the Forest" and the "Cock of the North" and "Bonnie Dundee" and "The Forty-Second," till if you had shut your eyes you might well have expected to open them on kilts swinging along Princes Street on their way to Holyrood to meet the King. There was no trouble about encores with these musicians, either.

They were so keen upon their work that they had to be hunted off to bed like small boys, to prevent them interfering with the rest of the programme. Their place was taken by weird Baluchi dancers and weirder musicians.

These later were the direct heirs of the troubadours.

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They operated in pairs, the one with a kind of lute, the other a gentleman who, after clearing his throat and filling his lungs with a comical sort of chest cough, began to sing the accompaniment of the strings. Very fast, and using only one register and about three notes in the scale, he sang the news of the day for the benefit of his fellows—what murders had been committed; where it had rained and had not; the state of the barley crop, and who had stolen somebody else's wife. A few hundred years ago wanderers were doing the same sort of thing all through Europe. One has only to travel in this world to encounter the Dark Ages. We were always meeting them.

When we went to bed at twelve o'clock, I wondered why I felt inclined to faint. I suddenly remembered that I had a poisoned foot, of which I had known only subconsciously during the evening's concert. Hale, our host, was undoubtedly a splendid physician.

4

Next day we crossed the Indus, approaching it by a long, flat road floored with reeds and edged with swampy villages full of wallowing buffaloes and mud huts among dark, smoky jungle. The Charon of the Public Works Department was waiting for us with his ferry, which was a large steamer on to which the car had to be driven from the bank.

The Indus is a wonderful stream. In all its length of 2000 miles it is nowhere less than 500 feet wide; here it was nine miles across.

At this stage in its progress, it has the sated look of an old traveller to whom neither earth nor death are over-important. The land along its banks is light, grey-green; the clouds above it are similar to those which one sees hedging the horizon above a tropic ocean on a calm day. A slight steam rises from its slow, flat expanse of waters, which stretch so far that the more distant

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bank begins to sink over the horizon as your eye reaches it. In it lie long sand bars, each with its vultures waiting for a slow-passing corpse, or natives, leisuring with their nets, or patient and statuesque in their quest for a crocodile.

The Equatorial sea and the Indus are the only places in the world, perhaps, which give you a sense of proper unreality, as if they did not belong to the earth. Here, even the steamer might well have been of another universe. It was of a kind that has mostly died years ago. And, after the duller hues of the mountains, the costumes of its crowded inhabitants seemed bright beyond human possibility. Women in saffron robes with gold ear and nose rings nursed babies in scarlet. Pink turban and orange turban bobbed together. Donkeys with blue beads jostled a vast old gentleman in a white toga, and a dromedary in bells became tangled with a passenger in a grey Hindu cap and a pink robe and slippers, who carried a white and green umbrella and, immediately on coming aboard, bought his dinner of rice done up in leaves from the restaurateur who sat squat on the deck. He proceeded, having dealt with the camel, to suck his purchase into his interior in loud gulps while the boat filled.

A reverend person in scarlet arrived carrying his bed (they nearly all have their beds), and driving his family and a yellow cow, with a wreath of stephanotis round its neck and a verse from the Koran painted on its ribs, before him. The whole ship rocked as he entered, and though it seemed full before, he managed to so disarrange the tinkling camel and the donkeys as to find room for his *ménage*. Whereupon, every one cursed him to his utter unconcern.

Entered Methusaleh, Omar Khayyam, Abraham, Joseph, Ahasuerus, and Laban, Uz and Buz and Benaiah ben Jahoiadah, accompanied by Potiphar's wife.

When they had arranged themselves in some sort of

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disorder, the whistle blew and we started, a proceeding which did not in the least destroy the atmosphere of unreality. The sandbars, as we moved, developed a curious appearance of speed, against the current. The sheer alluvial bank fell away with a deep-throated "plomp" under the knife-edge of our slow wash.

The Indus went on to the ocean, swallowing alike the earth and our ripples and the dead bullock from Attock which drifted slowly past. Old Father Indus has seen too much when he has reached here to be disturbed by a steamer or a corpse. He has been to Tibet and roared in ravines among the foothills of the Himalayas. He has carved out, in the last million years or so, some of the grandest mountain scenes in the world. Kashmir he knows. The lower Punjab is so far from his source that it seems one of his afterthoughts in travel to those who know him higher up. Nevertheless, if you want to see inevitability translated into water, to see a river thoroughly beyond control and omnipotent so far as humanity goes, view the Indus at Dera Ghazi old Khan.

There men cannot control him with dykes because he is beyond control. They cannot bridge him because he is too wide, and moves a few million tons of foundation about for a week-end of exercise. The very steamer can cross only when he wills.

The fertility of the land is his concern, and every day he takes tons of earth back to himself as a feudal fee for what he does for agriculture.

We came to an island which had previously looked to be steaming up stream against the current with no effect. Two country boats waited for us there. One was full of passengers going back over our course.

The other was for us. The country boat seems to be the only vessel which can live amicably with the Indus, and like everything else here it is ancient. It has a high poop and a lantern bow, and naked galley slaves, choco-

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late and shining with water, bring it to the steamer's side. A bit of the Greek galley crossed with the trireme; a touch of the Phœnician ship; a hint of a junk, with all modern shipping improvements up to about the thirteenth century of Europe, complete its features. This one was barely wide enough to take the motor-car safely lashed to a float. The motor-launch which pulled us (and it) to our landing was barely strong enough to tow it four miles to the further bank, while all the natives toiling along the sides of the river, towing other country boats, and their buffaloes, stopped in their toil to watch us.

5

Now we were in India proper. Nothing before us for fifteen hundred miles but the Grand Trunk Road and historic cities which in the winter are full of tourists. This being summer, they were not full of tourists. Natives teemed. The moonlit roads at night were noisy with the tock, tock of bullock waggons passing. The dust rose in clouds under the loo. The towns were almost empty of whites, and before every office door was a shield of sac against which native servitors dashed buckets of water.

Under every mango tree lay its proprietor or lessee on his bed, waiting for the fruit to fall. Soldiers were in barracks; lemonade sellers doing a roaring trade.

And replacing the tourists in Lahore and Mooltan, were the mourners for the prophet Hussein, celebrating Moharrum with such religious fervour that it sometimes needed machine-guns and tanks to suppress them.

All India, indeed, appeared to be suffering from heat temper and fever and cholera, with a little plague for variety. Only the queer grey and black squirrels with their deceptive cobra marking, who really own the Indian roads, and the monkeys, to whom even churches are not sacrosanct, and the lordly peacocks, seemed unaffected. Even we, taking our daily dose of white metal from the

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crank-case, till we were running on the phosphor-bronze of our bearings and trying every little while to crank an engine which was both massive and out of line, began to suffer. Francis, for instance, took the starting handle and battered in our radiator, and I began to wonder whether dynamite or Samsonite would be the better for a really efficient explosive job.

We struggled on, carrying my gradually mending but still thoroughly offensive foot down the Grand Trunk Road between the guards of prickly pear with which India ingeniously keeps the cattle off its shade trees. Never once was the temperature less than 108° at noon. Never once did the heat seem to ease. We drank gallons of limejuice. We were the guests of limp, hospitable Scotch regiments in shorts. (If you need to suicide through kindness apply to the Black Watch.)

Then one day we paddled through the Chandni Chowk at Delhi and out to the new town which has been built on the site of old wars through the still shell-marked Kashmir Gate.

A curious stillness had set its fingers on everything. The sky seemed to be gradually sinking on us like a roof of lead. Before the Temple of Hanuman, the monkey god, near the river, half a dozen children lay huddled together. Every railway viaduct had its crowd edging in for shade. Only the Jumna was full of life—of happy buffaloes in mud to their necks and of singing dhobis, each holding a shirt by the cuff and lustily banging it upon a rock after the lavish manner of Indian washermen generally. Not a leaf moved. You felt as if you were being slowly absorbed into a giant, steaming lemon squeezer which would presently crush the life out of you.

The night came down with muttering thunder. A gusty wind blew along the verandas. And, immediately afterwards, we heard the plop-and-patter drumming of the rain barrage in the compound.

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I turned uneasily in my sleep; no more. At the time I was so tired that I could not realize what this meant to us, but on the next morning I knew our doom was sealed.

The monsoon had broken, rivers were running bank high. The sky was weeping vigorously all the way down to Singapore and our Odyssey was finished—so much finished that I got to Bombay by train less than three weeks later by the skin of my teeth, before the railway lines were washed away and the North-West isolated by the floods.

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CHAPTER XXVI

A TRAVELLER COMES HOME

ON August 6th, 1927, R.M.S. "Moldavia," a large P. & O. liner with a new funnel, lay in the harbour of Colombo when a young man, limping and rather pale, came on board with seven Cingalese bearers and two pieces of luggage. He wore a topi from Delhi, khaki shorts which had been made at Lahore, a shirt that came from Constantinople, a pair of Hungarian stockings and a tie which he had bought in London from an obsequious Regent Street firm.

His luggage consisted of a small green roll of canvas with grease-spots all over it, and a suit-case with only one catch and a battered exterior which proved—firstly, that even in these days a self-respecting portmanteau can travel 100,000 miles without accumulating a single hotel label; secondly, that there is still a deal of dirt left in the world.

The Traveller, having reached the top of the gangway and discreetly shielded a passing lady from the sight of his patches, asked the way to the second-class companion. One cannot travel first class when one has for outfit only two blankets (one chewed by a jackal), two pairs of shorts, a uniform with various tears and holes in it and a Persian lamb coat weighing twelve pounds and smelling like a tallow foundry. The P. & O. Company is rather particular about such matters as dressing for dinner, and this passenger felt that it was not worth while acquiring the garb of Solomon

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for an eight or nine days' voyage to the Australian coast.

Having found his cabin, he came on deck. Lovely Ceylon, the brightest and most prosperous gem in the British Empire, lay on the horizon. A coolie, very Tamil of aspect and dirty of feet, sat in the bottom of a boat below the rail and monotonously begged passengers to "please throw one bob for diving." A most exciting person to a tourist, but the traveller regarded him with a lack-lustre eye.

The passengers came back from Kandy full of the wonders of the Orient and of Colombo and Cinnamon Gardens and Lavinia Point and the Galle Face and the Temple of the Tooth, which in essence are Oriental only as the machinery of tourist commerce. Several of them told the Traveller all about it over the dinner table and he merely grunted at them before he limped up to the boat deck and sat, back against stanchion, luxuriously watching the cool stars, and the Chatham Street light disappearing over the horizon.

At breakfast somebody told him about the marvels of Australia House and the London theatres and he was unmoved, and when they put him on to the sports committee (under protest) he seemed to imagine that his share of the work was lying in a deck chair. One of his fellow-members gently remonstrated with him about this.

"Everything seems to be dead on this ship," said the Fellow Member. "We're all pretty stale. What we need is a little excitement—just to stir us all up a bit. Now if we could get the deck quoits properly going it would make things hum. Don't you agree?"

"I do," said the Traveller fervently. And forthwith he sank back and continued the particular form of occupation in which he was engaged, which was the re-reading of the "Forsyte Saga."

Nor did he cease from this thrilling labour (even the

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sighting of flying fish did not move him) till the clean boronia scents of Perth wafted out past Rothnest and the thought of the Swan, seen through golden wattle in King's Park, tempted him ashore in his own Australia.

If you had asked him—that is, me—what he appreciated most during the next fortnight, you would have been told in succession the Outer Harbour at Adelaide; the waving of friends on Princes Pier; St. Kilda Road on a spring morning; the sunlit coast of the N.S.W. Riviera (it is very like the original from the sea); the frowning cliff of the North Head of Port Jackson with birds and the sun over it and the brief first glimpse of a dark patch of lawn above Balmoral, which, seen beyond a rolling Manly ferry boat, a few minutes before Sydney's thrill of skyline heaves into sight, was my old home before I went away.

"I see you are lame," said the first casual acquaintance I met in Macquarie Street. "Been ill? I haven't seen you for some time."

So do your friends miss you after two years of wandering.

"No; been away."

"Indeed, a month off is good for all of us sometimes. Not that it suits me. I save up my leave and go home to England. That's what some of you young fellows ought to think of doing."

"Yes?"

"You bet it is. You see Colombo and Port Said and all those out-of-the-way places and Westminster Abbey and the Tower. And Paris"—he winked—"stirs you all up and makes you realize how really far we are from things out here. There's nothing like travel to take the insular conceit out of you."

"There isn't," I said, as I dodged a motor-car.

I walked through the streets marvelling at the whiteness of the population and its lack of rags and the extraordinary manner in which six-story buildings had been

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pulled down all over the place since I left and replaced, as by magic, with twelve-story ones.

In one of these innovations I found the Engineer, with whom this tale started.

So much of the world had run under my bridge since I saw him a year before that I expected him to have grown a white beard. But he was still as I left him when he flew away from me to Paris on his way to Australia, after the night of our plannings in Park Lane when this journey was arranged.

He was busy at the moment inventing an electric hare which greyhounds could not catch and which would not go on strike. And at that pleasant and profitable game I left him, to take up again the white man's burden and the daily grind for bread.

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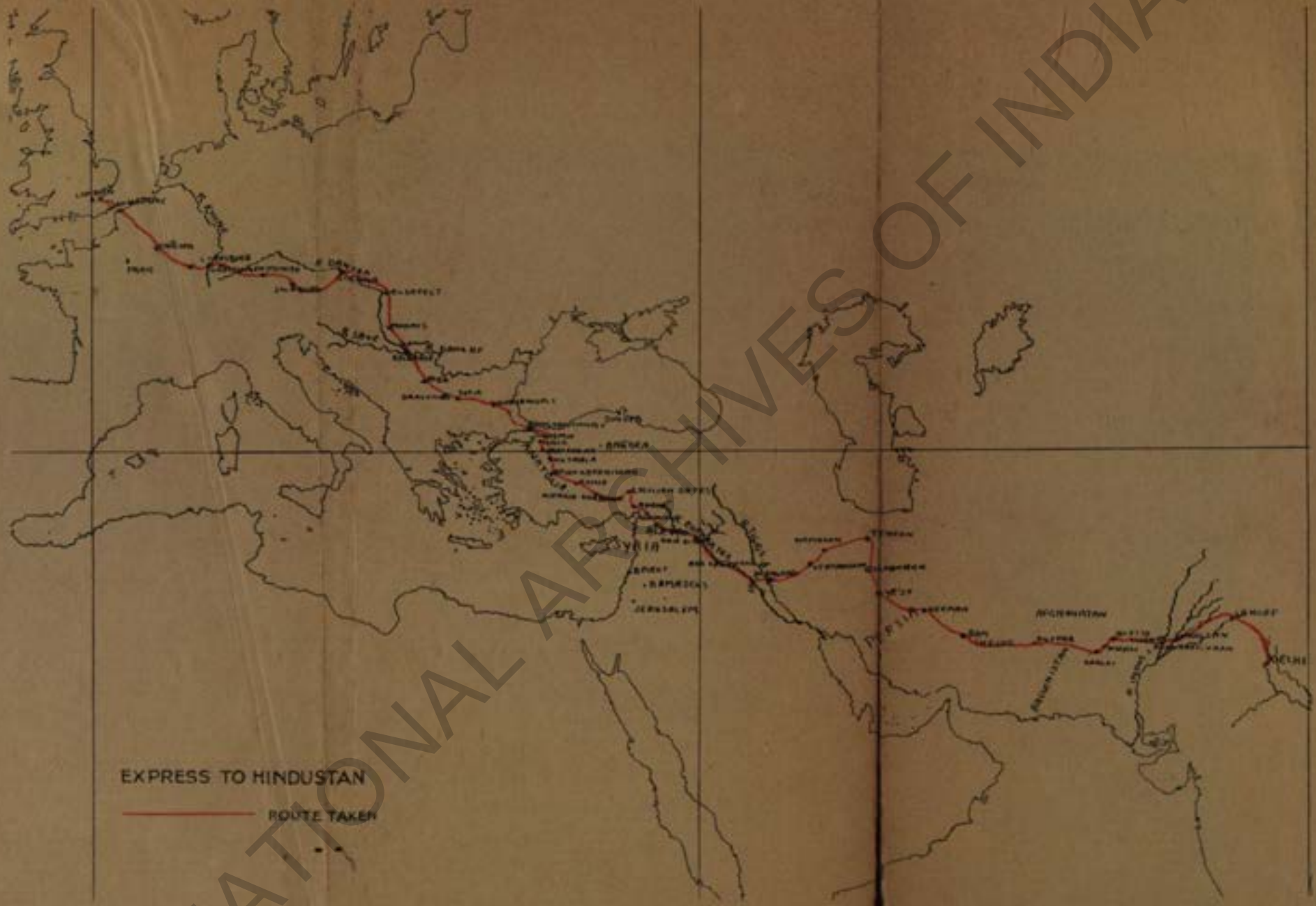

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